# Mondaiji-tachi ga iseki kara kuru soudesu yo Volume 01

Source: https://www.baka-tsuki.org/project/index.php?title=Mondaiji-tachi_ga_isekai_kara_kuru_soudesu_yo:Volume_1

YES!
ウサギが
呼び
ました!
問題児
異世界から
来る
そうですよ?
たちが
Tatsunokotarou
竜ノ湖太郎
illustration
天之有
角川
スニーカー
文庫

黒ウサギのところに
来てくれませんか♥
……あざとすぎじゃないかしら？
違う。この絵は黒ウサギが狙ってやっ
無理やりやらせたのは誰ですか！

彼らが呼び出されたのは、
完全無欠に
異世界でした！
久遠 飛鳥
逆廻 十六夜
春日部 耀
ドキ
ドキ
あーもう、いい加減に話を聞いてください！
私は誰？
此処は何処？

〝箱庭の騎士〟と呼ばれる吸血鬼
そして元魔王――レティシア
へえ？
金髪ロリ少女が
吸血鬼とは
また王道な

YES! ウサギが呼びました!
問題児たちが異世界から来るそうですよ?

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口絵・本文イラスト／天之有
口絵・本文デザイン／百足屋ユウコ（ムシカゴグラフィクス）

# Prologue

## Part 1

It was early summer.

Sakamaki Izayoi was enjoying the sweet fragrance of early summer at the riverbank. Admiring the sun, he muttered to himself "Ah, found a dark spot. Maybe the sun really is entering a glacial period."

His motto was "The heavens did not create man above myself" and he seemed to prefer global warming to global cooling.

He had no inclination to go to school, so instead he tried to think of ways to play around at the riverbank while still wearing a uniform, but any he could think of would be embarrassing if seen by strangers. And if he were to be seen by someone he knew, they would end up pointing a finger at his back afterwards for sure.

"There’s gotta be something fun going on."

Taking off his headphones, he heard the voices of a group of delinquents standing around wearing long coats with "Fighting Spirit" written on them. In the middle, there was a boy being beaten up by them, and forced to kneel and apologize.

"Hey, this is terrific, this guy is really crying. Disgusting, let’s throw him into the river to get him clean."

"Then let’s make him jump in butt naked, with both his hands and legs tied up!"

"Hiii.....!"

The boy was trembling in a squatting position. Sakamaki Izayoi slowly sat up and started talking to the group that was still kicking and hitting the boy a few dozen meters away.

"Aaah, I’m bored. Really bored. If I could sell my boredom, I’m confident I could make a living. Hey, dumb looking fools over there, how about you provide me some entertainment and I will reward you with a nice long-term vacation at the hospital."

"Come on, take off your clothes fast and jump into the river already!"

"Let’s at least tie his hands together. As long as his legs are free, he won’t die."

"Help me.....Help me....Help me...."

There was no reaction to Sakamaki Izayoi’s words. It was to be expected.

He didn’t yell at them, and just spoke as if to someone right beside him. There was no way his words could have reached them; they just got carried away by the wind instead. Because of the beating he'd taken, the boy’s face was quite unsightly. He was covered in dirt, tears, and nasal fluids.

"....."

Sakamaki Izayoi stood up without saying a word.

He picked up a few palm sized stones from the ground, then started throwing them while yelling, "Let me in on the fun too!"

The impact of the stone blew away the whole riverside. That's not a figure of speech. There's no need for rectification.

Exactly as described, the stone flew at the stupidly high speed of the Third Cosmic Velocity, and with a thunderous roar and huge cloud of dust, blew away the delinquents, the boy, and the riverside alike.

"Arghh!"

"It-It’s Sakamaki Izayoi! Everyone, run for it!"

"He-Help...."

"I'll keep 'em coming!"

The stones continued to fly, accompanied by resounding laughter, and left craters upon impact, just like a bombardment would. Both the delinquents and the bullied boy ran away, terrified.

And just to be clear, Sakamaki Izayoi didn't throw those stones to save that boy.

"Crush the strong, crush the weak" was also one of his mottos.

"Haha! Pathetic, pathetic! Is 'Fighting Spirit' only on the back of your coats?"

Sakamaki Izayoi was holding his stomach and laughing as he watched them run away. He kept rolling about with laughter and stamping his feet on the ground.

The only sound remaining in the area was the sound of his laughter. There was no one else around, and so when Izayoi stopped laughing the area became quiet.

There was no sign of anyone else near the riverbank. Boys and girls his age are probably having lunch in school right around this time.

Sakamaki Izayoi stood up silently.

"........Boring."

He said, expressing his deepest feelings. He only found the scene of the delinquents and the boy running away ironic; he did not get any real enjoyment out of it. He laughed loudly, but it was just for show. It was far from real fun. Sakamaki Izayoi let his feelings of emptiness go with a deep sigh, and turned his back on the riverside.

".....Hm?"

Woosh. At the same time he started to move, a strong sideways wind started blowing. A sealed letter was dancing in the wind and - after following a very

unnatural trajectory - it delivered itself into Izayoi’s bag, like a thread through the eye of a needle.

"....What the hell was that?"

He took out the mysterious letter.

The recipient's name was written neatly on the envelope: "To Sakamaki Izayoi-dono."

## Part 2

The garden was noisy from the loud chirping of cicadas.

"Enough of this. Silence!" Kudou Asuka yelled towards the garden.

And suddenly there was silence.

The crowd of cicadas stopped chirping all at the same time, as if they had rehearsed it beforehand. It seems the words of the Kudou family's Ojou-sama were more important to them than their courting activities.

Without even finding this odd, she continued strutting through the well maintained mansion's corridors at a fast pace. She wondered why, even though this place belonged to one of the five biggest conglomerates in Japan, it didn't have air conditioning in the hallways.

She stormed into her room, wiping the glistening sweat off of her hair. She made sure to lock the door and then threw herself on the bed, which caused it to shake from the momentum. But it seems that she wasn't satisfied with just that, and she bounced one more time.

"So my relatives are having a meeting about the dismantling of the conglomerate? I did not expect that they would call me to the farthest corner of Japan for such a reason."

To put an end to a meeting that had been going on for months already, she was dragged before the Head of the family. The family Head was already bedridden, but his authoritative voice was still widely feared and respected.

She was speechless when the relatives came to her pleading "Please, do something about him!", asking a girl, barely 15 years old, to resolve the situation.

The still dumbstruck Kudou Asuka traveled to the family Head’s mansion and said to him only one short sentence.

"Stop complaining and cooperate with the dismantling of the conglomerate!"

"Understood."

He agreed without even a single complaint. It didn’t even take 10 seconds. It couldn’t even be called a meeting anymore at that point.

Without waiting to see if it really led to a real conclusion, she immediately turned around and left the mansion. Even the relatives who were expecting this outcome could not help but doubt their eyes and ears.

As the relatives would put it, everything that the Kudou family’s Ojou-sama says will happen without fail. It’s not like there is a law or rule about it - anything she says will simply happen, just like that. They claim it to be a powerful suggestion, hypnotism, or even brainwashing, but she didn't agree with any of them. She just says what she thinks out loud.

No one can go against the flow of the current society, so there was no choice but to dismantle the conglomerate. She tried reassuring herself with these thoughts.

"....Ludicrous, even against that Ojii-sama, this is all it took. It is laughable, really."

She grasped the bed sheet tightly, lying face down. That was what really bothered her. Relationships where the only answer you hear is "Yes" are plain and without substance. To put it simply, she could only build meaningless relationships, and Kudou Asuka was tired of those meaningless relationships.

"....It is hot. What is it with this humidity?"

This dress is the greatest problem of all, should I just leave the hair ribbon and change the rest?

Asuka’s eyes wandered around the room, suddenly fixating on a suspicious sealed envelope that was left on the desk.

The following was written on the envelope: "To Kudou Asuka-dono."

"......?"

Asuka tilted her head.

She immediately glanced at all the possible entrances, the door, the window, and the secret emergency escape route, but they were all locked and none of them showed any signs of entry. At that moment, someone knocked on the door, and a maid’s voice could be heard.

"Asuka Ojou-sama, I brought some refreshments-"

"You there, did someone enter my room while I was gone?"

"? Only Ojou-sama has the key to this room, therefore no one could have entered."

"Right...that is true. It is fine. You can leave now."

The maid bowed politely and then left the room. Kudou Asuka rechecked all the possible entrances, but none of them appeared to have been used. Which meant that it should have been impossible to leave that envelope in this room.

"....Fufu. I do not know who you are, but a 'sealed room letter' instead of a 'sealed room murder'... I like your style."

She even forgot about the blazing heat, and for the first time in a very long time, a smile appeared on her face. She joyfully broke the seal on the envelope.

## Part 3

The autumn rains had ceased and the momiji leaves had started falling. Kasukabe Yō was making preparations in her room to go sightseeing before the falling leaves lost their color. She was preparing to put her kimono on, when a calico cat ran to her feet.

*"So-Something very strange happened Yō-ojou-chan! A letter addressed to you fell from the sky!"*

"....From the sky?"

For your information, the cat was just a regular cat. The one special in some way was not the cat, but Kasukabe Yō. The calico cat pushed the letter into her hands while trying to climb up to her shoulders.

*"Don't misunderstand, Ojou! I am not kidding at all! This letter really fell from the sky!"*

The calico cat sounded like he was making excuses, so she gently patted his head and lifted him up while showing a slight smile.

"I believe you. You're telling the truth." She said smiling gently.

Her tone was calm and soothing. The cat calmed down for a moment, but then became very interested in the contents of the envelope, so he started looking pleadingly at her.

*"Ojou, please open it already, I will lose all my fur from anticipation."*

"After I get back."

Kasukabe Yō then put the cat and the letter down and continued putting her kimono on. But the curious cat could not leave it at that. Once again he tried to climb up her

clothes with his claws open, saying, *"Ojou~! Let's read it now~ ! Don't bother with this kimono now, after this-"*

Ripp! The unpleasant sound of fabric tearing could be heard. She looked down fearing what she might see, and in fact on the side of the kimono all the way down was a long tear.

"....."

*"O-Ojou.....!"*

Kasukabe Yō was just standing there struck with grief. It was a scarlet, long-sleeved kimono, with momiji leaves as decoration. This one was her favorite. This kimono was a seasonal wear, so if she can't wear it this time around, she wouldn't be able to till next year. By the looks of the tear, it would take quite some time before it's repaired.

.....It's a real shame. She didn't know how to express it.

*"O-Ojou...I was-I was just...!"*

"It's ok, don't worry about it. Can't do anything about it now." She let out a sigh and smiled somewhat bitterly at the calico cat.

Kasukabe Yō then changed back to her normal clothing, a sleeveless jacket and shorts. Then she took off her hairpin, and broke the seal on the letter brought by the calico cat.

*"What is it?"*

"....."

After breaking the seal on the envelope that fell from the sky, she stared at the letter for a long time. The curious cat climbed up her shoulders and started reading the contents.

## Part 4

"Boys and girls with wondrous talents and much distress, I address thee! If you strive to test your Gifts, then cast aside your friends, your possessions, your world, and come to our **Little Garden**"

## Part 5

"Wha-?"

"Kya-!"

The scenery changed before their eyes without any transition. Suddenly, they found themselves 4000 meters up in the air. Even while suffering from the pressure of falling, they all had similar thoughts about the situation and said mostly the same words.

"Where the hell is this?!"

An entirely foreign scenery unfolded before their eyes. At the horizon, a steep fall could be seen presenting an abrupt ending to the world. Under them was an unknown fully covered city, so huge it confused their sense of scale.

The world before their eyes was an entirely different world.

# Chapter 1

## Part 1

**Workshop Number: 360, Residential Area, Outer Gate Number: 2105380, Little Garden.**

"Did the summoning go well, Kuro Usagi?"

"It seems so, Jin-bocchan."

Answered Kuro Usagi shrugging her shoulders in a jestful manner. She had rabbit ears and looked around 15-16 years old. The small boy next to her let out a sigh. He was wearing a large robe, which was very unfitting for his small stature.

Kuro Usagi, who was wearing a suggestive mini skirt and garter stockings on her beautiful legs, touched her index finger to her lips, and assumed a cutesy pose and added,

"Well, we will have to wait and see how it turns out. Nothing good comes from being pessimistic. We just have to emphasize how fun this place looks on the surface. It would be easiest to confess on the first meeting that "*Our Community is on the brink of total destruction!*" but that will only cause them to be wary about joining us," explained Kuro Usagi flinging her arms about in the process.

The reluctant boy listened, with quickly changing facial expressions, but in the end he nodded in approval.

"Sorry to leave everything to you, but can I ask you to pick them up?"

"Leave it to me!"

Kuro Usagi suddenly jumped out of the chair.

When she touched the workshop’s door, the young boy spoke to her with concern in his voice.

"Will their arrival...save our community...I wonder?"

"Who knows...but the Host promised one thing," she said while quickly turning to face him again, sending her skirt aflutter as she smiled at him mischievously, "The Gifts they possess are of the highest class in humanity!"

## Part 2

"Ginyaaaaaaaaa! O-Ojou——!"

Falling from 4000m in the air, the four of them passed through multiple thin membranes of water that were prepared above the landing point, then fell into a small lake.

"Kya!————"

"Wa!————"

They landed in the water with a loud splash. As the water membranes slowed their fall enough, the three of them landed safely, but the calico cat that fell with Yō didn't have it that easy. She embraced the cat and pulled him to the surface in a hurry.

"...Are you alright?"

"I thouht I bwas ghonna die...!"

The cat couldn't speak properly yet, but she was relieved he was all right.

In the meantime the other two quickly reached the shore while spouting curses all over.

"I-I cannot believe it! To think they would pull me out without saying a word and on top of that, drop me from the sky!"

"Same here, dammit! Depending on the situation, it could have been Game Over on the spot. It would have been better if they summoned us inside a rock or something at least."

"...But if they did that then you wouldn't be able to move, could you?"

"No problem for me."

"I see. Quite selfish of you."

The two of them turned their back on each other with a "Hmpf", and started wringing the water out of their clothes. Behind them, Yō climbed out of the lake to the shore. Following the other's example, she started squeezing the water out of her clothes. Next to her, the calico cat shook his whole body spraying water everywhere.

While drying her clothes Yō asked,

"Where... could this be?"

"No idea. Well, there was something that looked like the end of the world, so maybe we're on the back of some huge turtle?"

Answered Izayoi to Yō's question.

One thing was for sure, it was a place they knew nothing about. After the boy deemed his clothes dry enough, he brushed a stubborn lock of hair aside and asked,

"There is probably no mistake, but just to make sure, I'll ask you anyway. Did you guys also get a strange letter?"

"That is right, but first of all, do not address me that way. My name is Kudou Asuka. Pay attention to that from now on. Moving on; you there holding that cat, your name is?"

"Kasukabe Yō. Same situation as you."

"I see. Let us get along from now on, Kasukabe-san. Finally, you with the uncivilized and savage looking appearance over there?"

"Wow, thanks for that pompous self-introduction. I'm - just as the appearance suggests - uncivilized and savage, Sakamaki Izayoi. Vulgar, brutal, and hedonistic; all that I need to be a hopeless person, so please follow the Rules of Use and Dosage Guidelines when interacting with me, Ojou-sama."

"I see. If you give me Handling Instructions I will think about it, Izayoi-kun."

"Haha, are you serious? I will make one, so be prepared for it, Ojou-sama."

Sakamaki Izayoi laughing cheerfully.

Kudou Asuka turning away haughtily.

Kasukabe Yō watching indifferently.

Watching them from the shadows Kuro Usagi was thinking.

(*Uwaa, all of them seem like problem children!*)

Well, she summoned them, but... she really can't imagine them working together. She let out a melancholic sigh.

Izayoi started getting irritated.

"So, It's all dandy that we got summoned, but why isn't there anyone around? In this situation shouldn't there be someone explaining about that 'Little Garden' that was written in that invitation?"

"Indeed. Without any explanation, there is not much meaning to leaving this place."

"....I doubt that being overly calm in this situation is for the best either."

(*Honestly!*), Kuro Usagi retorted silently.

If they would panic a bit more it would be easier to just jump out, but if they're this calm and collected, it’s hard to find the appropriate timing for it.

(*Well, no use thinking about it more than this. I just have to make up my mind before the situation gets even more awkward.*)

Hearing each of them express their dissatisfaction, Kuro Usagi almost got cold feet, but she persevered.

All of a sudden Izayoi took a deep breath and while exhaling said.

"I guess there is no other choice than to ask that one lurking over there."

In the shadows, Kuro Usagi’s heart jumped as if grabbed by someone. Their eyes all gathered around Kuro Usagi’s hiding place.

"Oh, you noticed too?"

"Of course. I’m undefeated in hide-and-seek."

"If they stand upwind, I know even if I don’t want to."

"Ooh, you are an interesting one."

Said Izayoi laughing, but his eyes did not seem happy.

In retaliation to the unreasonable assembly they suffered, they turned a cold and menacing gaze towards Kuro Usagi. This made her hesitate for a moment.

"Do-Don’t, three of you. If you look at me with a wolf-like expression, I'll die. Ee..., Ee... . From ancient times, loneliness and wolves are rabbits' natural enemies. So on account of Kuro Usagi’s weak heart, I would be happy if you would hear me out peacefully."

"I refuse!"

"Denied."

"I have to decline."

"Ahaha, not leaving me any time to say anything."

Said Kuro Usagi standing there defeated, still observing the three of them intently.

(*They've got guts, that's a plus. To be able to say NO in this situation is quite something. Well, being hard to handle does seem to be one of their flaws.*)

Kuro Usagi was acting like she was just fooling around, but she was thinking calmly on how to interact with the three of them.

Unexpectedly Kasukabe Yō appeared next to her and grabbed hold of one of Kuro Usagi's rabbit ears at the base.

"Ei?"

"Fugya!"

And pulled it with full force.

"Wa-Wait a second! If it's only touching I would let you do it without a word, but I didn't think you would try to pull Kuro Usagi's lovely ears off on our first meeting! What are you thinking!?"

"Sating my curiosity."

"You can't do everything you please!"

"Ooh, these rabbit ears are real?"

This time Izayoi pulled on one of them from the right.

"....Well then, me as well."

"Wa-Wait a momen-"

This time Asuka did the same from the left. Kuro Usagi's ears got pulled in both directions simultaneously and her inarticulate scream could be heard far and wide.

Part 3

"…Un-Unbelievable. To think it would take a whole hour for you to start listening to me... This must be how it feels to be the teacher of a class full of problem children."

"Just start it already."

Kuro Usagi with almost tears in her eyes, finally managed to get them to listen to what she had to say. The three of them sat down before her and turned some of their attention towards her.

Kuro Usagi pulled herself together, cleared her throat, spread her arms and started speaking.

"Is it really alright to start, you three? I will start! I will start right now! Welcome to the world of Little Garden. We summoned the three of you to grant you the privilege to take part in the Gift Games, in which only those with Gifts of their own could participate."

"Gift Games?"

"Indeed! You probably noticed, but none of you are ordinary humans. Those extraordinary abilities you possess are blessings you could have received from various deities, demons, spirits, and stars. Gift Games are events for those with Gifts to compete with each other. And lastly, Little Garden is a world, that was created solely for the purpose of those powerful Gift bearers to enjoy and reside in."

Emphasized Kuro Usagi the appeal of Little Garden.

Asuka put her hand up to indicate she had questions.

"I will start with basic questions if that is acceptable. First of all, who are that 'we' you mentioned?"

"Yes! Gift bearers summoned from another world must join one of the many Communities of Little Garden to thrive."

"No way."

"You must join one! Moreover, the winner of a Gift Game gets the prize provided by the Host. It’s a really simple system."

"Who is the Host?"

"They could be all manner of individuals. There are Games held by deities with too much free time, with the purpose of testing mortals, and there are ones that are self-organized by various Communities so they can demonstrate their superiority. As a distinguishing feature, the former usually does not restrict who can participate. But as to be expected from deities, those games can be brutal and extremely difficult, with no guarantee of survival. However, the rewards are exceptional. It depends on the Host, but there is a chance you will be able to obtain a new Gift. As for the latter, you need to provide something to use as a Chip in exchange for the right to participate. The rule is, if all the participants are defeated, all the Chips will belong to the Host Community."

"The latter is quite crude. What can be used as a Chip?"

"That also can be a great variety of things. Money and goods, land, rights, honor, people... And it is possible to bet the Gifts themselves. If you obtain a new talent from someone, it becomes feasible to take part in even higher level Gift Games. However naturally, if you lose a Gift Game with your Gift on the line you will also lose your ability."

There was a dark shadow underneath Kuro Usagi’s charming smile. Her smile could be taken as a provocation, so Asuka asked the next question in a similar tone.

"I see. Then is it alright if I ask one last question?"

"By all means, by all means♪"

"How can someone start the Game itself?"

"If we exclude the Games between Communities, then all you have to do is sign up before the registration deadline of each Gift Game. Shopping districts and shops organize small scale Gift Games, which you can participate in if you please."

Asuka raised an eyebrow after hearing Kuro Usagi's words.

"Then is it correct to think of Gift Games as the law itself in this world?"

"Oh?" Thought the surprised Kuro Usagi.

"Fufun. You are quite quick on the uptake. But I'm afraid that is only 80% correct, and 20% mistaken. Theft and robbery are prohibited in our world too and exchange of goods via currency is present also. Crimes committed by the use of Gifts are preposterous! Those criminals will be punished thoroughly! However, the essence of Gift Games are just the opposite! There, the winning party will attain everything. It is possible to take the merchandise without payment if you are able to clear the winning conditions set by the shop for instance."

"I see. It seems barbaric somehow."

"You are quite right, but the Host bears all the responsibilities regarding it's own Gift Games. In other words those cowards who don't want their possessions taken should not even partake in such events."

It seemed like Kuro Usagi finished explaining the basics, and now she pulled out a sealed envelope.

"Now then, since it was me who requested your summoning to this world, I have a duty to answer all questions you might have regarding the world of Little Garden. However, it would take too much time right now to explain everything, and as ally

candidates, we cannot avoid exposing you to the outside world for long. So if it’s alright with you, we could continue this conversation at our Community."

"Wait a minute! I haven’t asked any questions yet."

Izayoi who was only listening until now, stood up, raising his powerful voice. When Kuro Usagi noticed that his smile that seemed like it was carved on his face was gone, she asked back while staying on guard.

"...What question would it be? About the rules? About the game itself?"

"That doesn’t matter. I couldn’t care less about that, Kuro Usagi. Even if we make you recite all the rules, nothing would change. It’s a revolutionary’s job to change the rules of the world, not a player’s. The only thing I want to ask you… is about that letter we got."

Izayoi took his eyes off of Kuro Usagi, ran his eyes over the other two, and finally rested his gaze on the city covered by an enormous shroud.

He only asked one thing with a glance that looked down on everything.

"Is this world.... fun?"

"...."

The other two were waiting for the answer silently. In the letter they received, it was written as such: "Cast aside your family, your friends, your possessions, your whole world, and come to our Little Garden."

The most important question right now for them was whether or not there is a fitting compensation for their sacrifices.

"....YES! Gift Game is a devil’s game for those who transcended the limits of humanity. The world of Little Garden is much more fun than other worlds, I personally guarantee it!♪"

# Chapter 2

## Part 1

**The place is Little Garden, Outer Gate number 2105380, Peribed Avenue, front of the Fountain Plaza.**

A group of children were playing around in front of the stairs leading to the interior of Little Garden.

"Jin~ Jin~ Jin~! Why isn't Kuro Usa-neechan back already?"

"We already waited 2 hours in vain! I'm tired of this..."

The group of friends all started voicing their dissatisfaction, so Jin said with a slightly bitter smile:

"...Looks like it. All of you can go home now. I will wait for our new allies here."

Jin, the boy with unique characteristics - curly hair and an oversized robe - instructed the children gathering around him to go ahead and return home.

"Then we'll go home~. It's tough being a leader, but still do your best Jin~!"

"If it's alright to go back, then tell us sooner! My legs are like a wooden stick!"

"I'm hungry. Is it alright to eat dinner without waiting for you?"

"Yeah. But don't stay up late even if we don't come back in time!"

The children started making their way home with a cheerful noise.

Jin sat down on the stone stairway.

As a way to pass his free time now that he was alone, he directed his gaze absent-mindedly to the people passing through the gate.

(I heard the countries created outside Little Garden became more active recently, but since this Peribed Avenue faces the [Edge of the World] there is not much going on...)

In Little Garden, the term [Country] was commonly used to speak about extremely large communities.

There is a clearly defined [Edge of the World] for the world of Little Garden, but they say that in the size of the surface area, it rivals a sun.

There is no way that much natural resource and abundant land would be left undeveloped.

The talented gather people and create a country, but at the same time there are many of those who do not possess any talent that start living outside the veiled city of Little Garden.

Races like Dragon-kind, Demon-kind, Mythical Beasts and Spirits all have large-scale settlements outside the walls of Little Garden.

People with Gifts can gain strength in these cities outside Little Garden, then use those newly gained powers to once again participate in Gift Games inside of Little Garden.

(If the people from the other worlds turn out to be useless, we may have to leave Little Garden and find a place to live on the outside)

Jin placed all his hopes and expectations on those new allies. Because a powerless Community can't organize Gift Games as a Host and can't participate and win in others either.

Declined to a state where it can't even support itself. That means a Community's demise.

Currently, for certain reasons Jin's Community - except for Kuro Usagi - was only comprised of children below his age.

Leaving behind the land they lived on since they were born and setting out for an aimless journey was something that he wanted to avoid at all costs.

"Jin-bocchan! I've brought new people~!"

Jin raised his head. Kuro Usagi and two other young ladies were walking on the road leading to the Outer Gate.

"Welcome back Kuro Usagi. Those two young ladies there?"

"Yes indeed! These three..."

Kuro Usagi turned her head around suddenly, and then promptly froze on the spot.

"...E, What? Wasn't there another one? A gentleman with fairly evil looking eyes, very bad mouth and an "I'm a problem child" aura emanating from his whole body."

"Ah, Izayoi-kun? He said "*I'm gonna take a look at the end of the world and be right back!*" and ran away in that direction."

In that direction.

Where she pointed was where they saw the steep cliffside from 4000m up in the air.

Standing dumbfounded in the middle of the road, Kuro Usagi started questioning them with ruffled up ears.

"Why didn't you stop him!?"

"Because he said, *"Don't stop me."*"

"Then why didn't you tell Kuro Usagi about it!?"

"Because he said, *"Don't tell Kuro Usagi about this"*"

"It's a lie. It must be a lie. You just thought it would be too bothersome, right you two?"

""Un.""

Kuro Usagi fell on her knees.

She was really envious of her past self from a few hours ago, when she was still enthusiastic about the new talents' arrival.

To think that all of them would turn out to be such problem children, there must be a limit to such harassment.

In contrast to Kuro Usagi, Jin turned pale and shouted.

"Thi-This is terrible! At the [Edge of the World] there are many Mythical Beasts roaming around freely for the sake of Gift Games."

"Mythical Beasts?"

"Ye-Yes. This term is used for beasts that possess Gifts, in particular near the [Edge of the World] there are some with powerful Gifts. Once you meet them it's over, no human can hope to oppose them!"

"Oh, that is a shame. Is it Game Over for him already?"

"Game Over before even starting a game? ... Witty."

"This is no time to be joking around!"

Jin was desperately trying to press the seriousness of the situation, but the two of them only shrugged their shoulders after getting scolded.

Kuro Usagi stood up while letting out a long sigh.

"Haa, ... Jin-bocchan. I am terribly sorry, but would it be alright for me to leave these two in your care?"

"I got it. What will you do Kuro Usagi?"

"Kuro Usagi will catch that problem child, and while I'm at it, I will make him painfully regret that he looked down on me, the one called the [Highborn of Little Garden]!"

Kuro Usagi recovered from her distress and started emanating an aura of rage from her whole body, changing her hair color from glossy black to light red.

Aiming for the outer gate, she jumped high in the air and ran up quickly with the help of carved statues on the side of the gate, then clung to one of the pillars of the gate so that she was standing horizontally and said.

"We will be back in a moment! You two just enjoy yourselves and explore Little Garden a bit!"

Her light red hair was fluttering around when she launched herself from the gatepost, leaving cracks in it. Kuro Usagi leapt away with full force, dashing away like a speeding bullet, she disappeared from their line of sight in no time.

While keeping her hair down from the resulting strong gust of wind, Kudou Asuka murmured.

".... Rabbits in Little Garden can hop around quite quickly. It is truly worthy of praise."

"They are the part of the household of Little Garden's Creator. She is not only strong, but possesses numerous Gifts and special authorities by being of noble birth. As long as she doesn't come across an especially powerful Mythical Beast, she should be alright, I think..."

Asuka responded with an absent-minded "I see", then she turned towards the concerned looking Jin and said.

"Well, Kuro Usagi said we should go ahead and explore, so let us take her up on that offer and move inside Little Garden. Will you be the one to escort us?"

"Eh, ah, yes. I am Jin Russel, the leader of this Community. I only recently became 11 years old and still very inexperienced, but let's get along from now on. Your names are?"

"I am Kudou Asuka, and the one holding the cat is,"

"Kasukabe Yō."

After introducing themselves Jin, Asuka and Yō bowed in turn.

"Then let us proceed inside Little Garden. Let me see... How about we have a talk over a light meal?"

Asuka took Jin's hand and started passing through the Outer Gate with a cheerful smile.

Part 2

**Little Garden, Outer Gate number: 2105380, Inner Wall**

The four of them, Jin, Asuka, Yō and the calico cat arrived on the other side underneath the veil after passing through a passageway made of stone.

In that moment, the four of them were engulfed in radiant light.

They saw enormous buildings as far as the eye could see and the veil covering the city.

*"O-Ojou! Even though we should've entered a shrouded city, we can see the sun!"*

"...Seems like it. But we didn't see into Little Garden from the outside."

From high up in the air they could not see the streets and buildings below the cover of the city.

Nonetheless now the sun is apparent on the sky of the city.

Looking at the city with buildings reaching for the sky, they tilted their head in confusion.

"The shroud covering Little Garden becomes see-through from the inside. It was originally placed there for the protection of species that can't take sunlight directly."

While gazing at the blue sky, Asuka raised an eyebrow and remarked with an ironic tone.

"That is a very interesting story. Could vampires be living in this city?"

"Well..., they do."

"...I see..."

Asuka put on a mixed expression.

She didn't know what kind of lives those real vampires led, but she didn't think they would live in the same city with everyone.

The calico cat slid down from Yō's arms and started admiring the view of the Fountain Plaza.

*"Still though... The air really feels different here than in other human settlements I know. It's as clear as the air deep in the mountains after the morning fog clears up. Look! That sculpture in the fountain is really well made! If Ojou's father could see it, he would be delighted for sure."*

"Yeah, I agree."

"Oh, did you say something?"

"....Nothing."

Yō replied with a tone very different from the gentle way she spoke with the calico cat.

Asuka didn't pursue her strange behaviour further, rather she turned her gaze towards the crowded Fountain Plaza.

Near the fountain there were a number of elegant and stylish sidewalk cafes.

"Is there one you recommend?"

"I-I'm sorry. I left the arrangements to Kuro Usagi... Please choose any one you like."

"That is quite generous of you."

Finally they sat down at a cafe bearing the flag of 'Six Scars'. From inside the shop, a cat-eared young girl quickly appeared to take their orders.

"Welcome! What can I get you?"

"Let me see...Two black tea and a cup of green tea. As for a light meal...this... and that."

*"And a nekomanma!"*

"Yes yes. So three tea sets and a nekomanma."

Hm...? Asuka and Jin tilted their heads in confusion. But the one who was even more surprised was Kasukabe Yō. With eyes like she was experiencing something beyond belief, she asked the waitress.

"You can understand what calico cat is saying?"

"Of course I do~, I belong to the feline race. This gentleman has very charming fur for his age, so I'll give you a bit of an extra service~."

*"Your ears are pretty too and have nicely bent tail, Nee-chan. The next chance I get, I will come again for a bite."*

"Oh mister, you're such a sweet talker♪"

The cat-eared young girl returned to the shop, swinging her tail back and forth on the way.

After watching her go back inside the shop, Yō started to pat the calico cat with a happy smile.

"...Little Garden is an amazing place, isn't it calico cat? There is someone else who can understand what you say other than me."

*"I'm happy for you, Ojou."*

"Wai-Wait a second. Perhaps you can converse with cats?" Asked Asuka with an unusually flustered voice.

In response, Yō nodded a little.

Jin was also fascinated and started asking questions.

"Can you also communicate with other species, not just cats?"

"Yeah. If it's alive, then I can talk with it."

"That sounds wonderful. Then you can even talk with those wild birds flying around?"

"Yeah, I probably ... can. The only birds I spoke with were sparrow, heron and cuckoo..., but I could talk with a penguin so it should be no problem."

"Penguin!?"

"U-Un. I've met one at the Aquarium. I'm also friends with dolphins."

As if interrupting Yō, Asuka and Jin raised their voice. Both of them were surprised by the same thing.

There should be plenty of chances for one to meet wild birds, but to think she had the opportunity to talk to a penguin!

"Bu-But if it's really possible for you to talk with every kind of species, then it's a very reassuring Gift to have. Here in Little Garden, the gap in understanding with Mythical Beasts is very wide."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. Some of the feline race and those who belong to a deity's household, like rabbits, are given an ability to communicate with other races, but Mythical Beasts are a whole independent species. It's common knowledge that if you are not of the same species or possess a suitable Gift, then it is very difficult to reach an understanding. Even Kuro Usagi who is the part of the household of Little Garden's Creator should not be able to communicate with every species."

"I see...Kasukabe-san has a wonderful ability, I am a bit jealous."

Once smiled upon, Yō scratched her face nervously. In contrast Asuka whispered with a melancholic voice and expression. Yō and Asuka only met a few hours ago for the first time, but Yō could already tell that Asuka's current expression doesn't seem like her.

"Kudou-san--"

"Just call me Asuka. Nice to meet you once again."

"Ah, ok. What kind of ability do you have, Asuka?"

"Mine? My power is ... well, just terrible. Because--"

"Oyaa? Isn't it the leader of that insignificant 'John Doe' Community from the East Block, Jin-kun himself. Kuro Usagi isn't here to babysit you today?"

A disrespectful and prudish voice called to Jin.

Behind his back was a strange man, over 2m tall and dressed in a colorful tuxedo. Unfortunately, really unfortunately, that strange man was someone Jin was familiar with.

Jin replied with a frown on his face.

"Our Community is called 'No Name', Galdo Gasper from 'Fores Garo'."

"Shut up you nameless. I heard you summoned new talents. It's shocking how you were able to keep your Community together in such a hideous state with its pride lost along with its [Name] and [Emblem].... Don't you think so, ladies?"

The bulky man named Galdo dressed in a colorful tuxedo, boldly sat down on the free chair at their table. Asuka and Yō smiled at him from courtesy, but at the same time they responded to his rude manner with a cold attitude.

"I am sorry, but if you wish to sit among us, would you care to introduce yourself before you start a conversation, as etiquette dictates."

"Oops, I'm sorry. I'm affiliated with a Community called '666 Beasts' that resides in the Upper Echelons of Little Garden."

"A disorderly mob."

"I'm the leader of -- Hey, wait a minute!! What disorderly mob, you brat!!!"

After hearing Jin's remark, Galdo raised his voice, and at the same time his face changed greatly. His mouth ripped open till the base of his ears, and predator like fangs and wide open eyes were directed at Jin with intense hate.

"Watch your mouth, kid. I'm known as a gentleman, but there are things even I can't pretend not to hear."

"In your times as the guardian of the forest, you would have taken a proper attitude towards us. Now you only look like a beast that lays waste to this neighborhood of Outer Gate number 2105380."

"Ha-, you are no different from a ghost clinging to the glorious past yourself. Do you even understand what kind of situation your Community is in?"

"There. Wait just a moment."

Asuka raised her hand to interrupt the bickering two.

"I do not understand the situation, but I clearly see that you two are on bad terms with each other. I would like to ask a few questions with that in mind."

Asuka sent an icy stare. However the target of her gaze was not Galdo Gasper, but--

"Ne, Jin-kun. Would you like to explain to us what Galdo-san might mean by pointing out our Community's current situation?"

"Tha-That is..."

Jin was at a loss for words. That time, he realized he made a huge mistake. It was about what he and Kuro Usagi wanted to hide.

Asuka did not miss his troubled expression, and pressed for answers.

"You introduced yourself as the leader of this Community. In that case, like Kuro Usagi, it should be your duty to explain to your newly summoned comrades what Communities are. Am I mistaken?"

Her asking voice was quiet, but her questions were assaulting Jin like a sharp knife.

Watching this scene, Galdo Gasper returned his beast-like face to its human form, then he said in a subdued tone and smile with hidden meaning.

"Lady, it's just as you said. Explaining the rules of the world of Little Garden to newly summoned comrades is his natural duty. But of course he doesn't want to. If you allow me, the leader of 'Fores Garo', I will objectively explain the importance of Communities and the situation of the Community 'No Name', this brat-- I mean Jin Russel is leading."

Asuka once again looked at Jin with a suspicious expression. He was still sitting there with his eyes cast down in silence.

"Might as well. Please do so."

"I certainly will. Firstly, Community is a general term, used for organizations founded by a number of individuals. Its form is different among different species. Humans use words as Family, Organization and Country in reference to them while Mythical Beasts call it [Horde]."

"I know that much."

"Yes, just making sure. For a Community to be active within Little Garden it needs to have a [Name] and an [Emblem]. Particularly important is the [Emblem] that is used to indicate the territory of a Community. This shop has a large flag too, floating up there. That one is also that."

Galdo pointed out the flag depicting the emblem of 'Six Scars' hanging from the roof of the sidewalk cafe.

"That emblem, made up of six scar marks, indicates that this shop is within the territory of the Community that manages it. If you wish to expand your Community, then you can bet that [Emblem] against another Community in a [Gift Game] you both agreed to. In fact, I expanded my Community using this exact method."

Galdo Gasper boastingly points to his [Emblem] engraved on his colorful tuxedo.

His emblem was made with a tiger stripe pattern. Yō and Asuka looking around the plaza saw stores and buildings decorated with the same pattern.

"If that pattern indicates the territory of a Community... Then is it correct to assume you are almost entirely in control of this neighborhood?"

"Indeed. Sadly the headquarters of the Community managing this shop is situated in the South Block so we can't make a move, but the rest of the active mid-class Communities around Outer Gate number 2105380 are all under my rule. The rest are roughly those with headquarters in different Blocks or higher Levels, ... And those that aren't even worth the effort to take over.", laughed Galdo sarcastically.

Jin was still grasping his robe tightly with eyes cast down.

"Now then, from now on are the problems with your Community, Ladies. To tell the truth ... the Community you now belong to was the greatest Community in this East Block until a few years ago."

"Hoh, how unexpected."

"Even though the leader was different then. It seems he was an excellent man, much superior to this Jin-kun now. Their scores with Gift Games were the best among humanity, they were the most powerful Community here in the East Block, they say."

After that Galdo suddenly started speaking in a bored tone. The one with the greatest Community right now was him, so this story must have been of no concern to him at all.

"In this Little Garden that is divided into West, East, North and South Blocks, beside the East Block he had deep relations with the core Communities of the North and South Block. Really, I'm telling the truth, ... Even though I detest Jin, that was really something. He earned the approval of the Mythical Beasts of the South and the Man-eating Monsters of the North, and even had connections with the Upper Echelons of Little Garden. So impressive I could almost even admire him.... Well, the previous leader anyway."

"..."

"The Community achieved grandeur unheard of among the Communities founded by humans, but ...! They caught the attention of someone you don't want to make an enemy of. In the end they were forced to participate in a Gift Game and were annihilated in a single night, by the worst calamity in this world of Little Garden that is governed by Gift Games."

"Calamity?"

Asuka and Yō asked back in unison.

It sounded very unreal that an organization that extensive could be destroyed by a simple natural disaster.

"This is not a metaphor, Ladies. They are the single biggest and worst disaster in Little Garden. ...The ones commonly called a [Demon Lord]"

## Part 3

"How far on earth did he get!?"

It was nearly half an hour ago that Kuro Usagi started looking for Sakamaki Izayoi.

It probably didn't look as much of a distance from 4000m in the air, but from the lake they fell in, the [Edge of the World] was extremely far. Since you have to cross the forest to get there, it is doubtful anyone could reach it on their first try.

(Furthermore, this area is part of a particular kind of deity's Game Territory. If they talk him into participating in a Game...)

His safety was even more at risk now.

She started running with increased haste, but when she heard eerie moans from the forest around her she stopped in her tracks.

*"Rabbit" "A rabbit is here" "A [Moon Rabbit] in this remote region!" "Just like the kid said" "Should we try to slow her down?" "Challenge her in a Game?" "Against the [Moon Rabbit]?" "But challenge her in what subject?" "Strength?" "Knowledge?" "Or maybe Valour?" "Impossible, either way there is no chance for us to win"*

Rabbits were called the [Highborn of Little Garden], they were of noble birth. In addition to their small numbers, they rarely go outside Little Garden.

Many evil spirits of the land gathered to take a quick look at the unexpected Rabbit visitor.

"Errr... Wise beings of the forest! Sorry for the sudden question, but did you see someone go through this way by chance? Would you be so kind to point me in the right direction?"

*"....." "....." "....."*

*"I could be your guide, if that's alright with you, Kuro Usagi-Ojousan"*

From the thicket, a reserved voice and the sound of hooves could be heard, very different from the evil spirits around. The one who appeared was a blueish-white colored horse with a horn reaching out of its forehead-- a type of Mythical Beast called a Unicorn.

"Thi-This is quite the rarely seen individual! The 'One-Horn' Community should be more to the south as I recall..."

*"I could ask you the same thing. It is unexpected to see a Rabbit to the east of Little Garden. I thought it was only possible during official Games between Communities-- ...Well let's not pry further to each others business. If you are looking for the same boy I have in mind, then he should be in the same direction I'm headed. It seems he challenged one of the Masters of the Forest, in other words a Water God."*

"Uwaa"

Kuro Usagi fell on her knees looking like she could faint at any time. At the steep cliff side called the [Edge of the World], was the Great Waterfall of the immense river called Tritonis that divided the world of Little Garden into 8 parts.

Dwelling in that area could only be the Dragon or the Serpent God from the Water God kind.

"Why... Really.... Why did this problem child....!"

*"There is no time to weep now. If that boy is your acquaintance, then we should hurry. Only the strongest survive the Game of this area's Water Gods. We may make it in time yet. Climb onto my back."*

"Yes,yes. ... Wha-what?!"

It was when Kuro Usagi tried to get on the Unicorn's back.

Suddenly a tremor shook the earth throughout the whole forest.

Immediately looking towards the river, in the far distance there were a number of water pillars so huge, one could see them with the naked eye.

Such an event was impossible during a regular Game.

"...I'm sorry. But it seems it would be best if I go alone."

*"Mu- ... I don't like to send a young girl into peril, but... Would I be in your way?"*

"Yes. If something happens I may not be able to protect you. And forgive my impoliteness, but Kuro Usagi runs faster too."

The unicorn took a few steps back with a bitter smile.

*"Take care. Give my regards to that problem child of yours too."*

Kuro Usagi nodded, then started running towards the river of Tritonis with a nervous expression.

Her figure became distant in a blink of an eye. Running faster than the wind while avoiding trees, she emerged outside the forest like a ray of light.

A few moments after she left the forest and her sight cleared, she was standing on the bank of the enormous river.

"Should be around here somewhere..."

"Hm? Are you Kuro Usagi? What's up with the color of your hair?"

The voice of that aggravating problem child could be heard from behind her.

It seems Izayoi was still alright.

Relief ... Was something she did not feel in the least. After this much pushing around, Kuro Usagi's sanity was at its limits. She furiously turned around.

"Where did you disappear to!?"

"To the [Edge of the World]. Well, don't be so angry."

His annoying smile was still present.

Looks like there was no need for concern, he was unharmed. The only aspect of him that was different from half an hour ago was that he was even more drenched than the time they fell from the sky.

"However I have to say, you have some pretty fast legs. I was just playing around, but still. I didn't think you would catch up with me this soon."

"Mu..., but of course! I am called the [Highborn of Little Garden], a distinguished Noble! To think I would...."

Wait a minute. Kuro Usagi tilted her head in confusion.

(I.... didn't catch up with him.... for more than half an hour?)

This was mentioned several times, but she was part of the household of Little Garden's Creator.

She moves faster than a hurricane and her strength is far greater than a run-of-the-mill War Deity. Thinking back now, the fact that she didn't notice when he disappeared, and that she couldn't catch up to him for half an hour, suggested inhuman physical abilities.

"Well anyway! It's good to see you were unharmed. I heard you accepted a Water God's challenge and that scared me to death..."

"Water God? ... Ahh, you mean that one?"

Eh? Kuro Usagi was petrified.

Izayoi was pointing at a barely visible long and white something floating in the river. Before Kuro Usagi comprehended what that was, the huge body raised its curved neck and said:

"Not yet.... The Test is not over yet you brat!"

What Izayoi was pointing at was an enormous serpent over 10m tall. It goes without saying, it was without a doubt a Water God that rules this area.

"Serpent God!.... How did you manage to make him this angry, Izayoi-san!?"

Izayoi explained the situation with a grin.

"He started babbling something about 'Choose your trial' or something looking down on me. So I tested whether if he could test me. In the end the result was well ... disappointing."

"You bastard... Don't get full of yourself, human! I won't be defeated by something like this!"

The Serpent God howled in a high pitched voice and his eyes and fangs sparkled. Pillars of water were being created by powerful currents of air.

Looking at the surroundings, Kuro Usagi can assume the numerous trees scattered around twisted and torn are the result of their battle.

If someone was swallowed up by those currents it's over. A human body would no doubt be mercilessly torn into a thousand pieces.

"Izayoi-san get back!"

Kuro Usagi tried to cover for him, but Izayoi's sharp glance stopped her.

"What the hell are you talking about? The one who needs to step back is you Kuro Usagi. I'm the one who picked this fight and he accepted. If you interfere I will crush you first."

The tone of his voice was dead serious. Kuro Usagi bit her lips, realizing there was nothing she can do once the Game had started.

The Serpent God responded to Izayoi's words.

"I applaud your spirit. On that account, if you manage to survive this blow, I recognize this as your victory."

"Don't talk nonsense. A fight doesn't end by deciding the winner. It ends when the loser is decided."

The winner was already clear.

Hearing Izayoi's insolent words both Kuro Usagi and the Serpent God were speechless.

"Phun, ... Those words will be your last!"

Responding to the Serpent God's roar, the water from the river spiraled upwards. Tornado like whirlpools swirling even higher than the Serpent God were sucking up hundreds of tons of water.

There were three whirling pillars of water. Each of them roared like a living being and moved like a serpent.

The power that could call forth storms and even destroy whole environments.

The power of the ones with the Gift of [Divinity].

"Izayoi-san!" shouted Kuro Usagi.

But it's already too late.

The swirling pillars of water ate into the riverbank, twisting and tearing the trees around, enveloping Izayoi's body.

"....Haaa.....Don't be cocky!"

It was a sudden occurrence. An attack exceeding the power of the storm. Izayoi inside the raging currents brushed aside the storm with one swipe of his hand.

"No way!?"

"Impossible!?"

Their voices were filled with shock. That power far transcended the limits of human capabilities.

The Serpent God let his guard down when the attack he poured all his power into got deflected so easily, but Izayoi did not miss this opportunity.

He landed on the ground with a merciless laugh.

"Well ... You were pretty good."

An explosive noise like the ground is breaking apart sounded from under his feet. Izayoi jumped up to its upper body and hit the Serpent God so hard that its huge body flew upwards, then fell back into the river. The impact forced the water to overflow, flooding the surrounding forest.

Izayoi returned to the shore looking annoyed.

"Shit. I get wet a lot today. Kuro Usagi, you will at least pay the cost of cleaning, right?"

Izayoi's joking words didn't even reach Kuro Usagi.

The inside of her head was in disarray, that was the least of her concerns.

(A human.... Defeated a Divinity? And with only raw strength? This kind of nonsense....!)

Then she remembered the words of the Host that provided the Gift that was used to summon them.

"They are without a doubt ... Among the most powerful Gift Bearers of humanity, Kuro Usagi."

Kuro Usagi was sure those words were only lip service.

They were said by a trustworthy person, but she doubted their truth even when she passed them on to Jin.

(I can't believe it.... But if they really possess such powerful Gifts....! The revival of our Community could be more than just a dream!)

Failing to control her excitement, she felt her heartbeat quicken.

"Oi, what's up with you? If you don't watch out I will grope your breasts or legs or something."

"Eh? Kyaa!"

Izayoi moved behind Kuro Usagi and used one hand to reach for her voluptuous breasts from under her armpit while using the other to place it somewhere between her miniskirt and garter socks and made the gestures to touch her thighs.

Kuro Usagi's moment of excitement was frightened out of her and she immediately pushed Izayoi away as she hopped clear of him as she yelled:

"Wha-, du-, du-, are you a dummy!? You intend to defile my chastity that I've protected for 200 years!?"

"The chastity you protected for 200 years? Uwa, I so want to defile it."

"Are you a big dummy?! No, you are a big dummy!!!"

She changed her question to a statement as an intended insult.

The Rabbit species was like someone somewhere packed all his tastes and preferences into it, beautiful face, innocent, indomitable spirit. Because of that the number of ruffians targeting her was like the number of stars in the sky.

So far no one was able to get close enough to touch her without her being able to react, never mind letting some big dummy - or rather, pervert - run his hand from her armpit to her breasts, almost touching them.

"Well, it's fine for now. Let's keep this for future enjoyment."

"I-Is that so!?"

This laughing long awaited new recruit could very well be Kuro Usagi's natural nemesis.

For a moment she had a distant look in her eyes.

"B-By the way, what will you do about that Serpent God? Is he alive at all?"

"I didn't go as far as taking his life. It was fun to fight him, but it wouldn't be any fun killing him. Once I've taken a look at the waterfall at the [Edge of the World] I will return to Little Garden."

"In that case, let's receive the Gift at least. No matter what the Game details were, Izayoi-san is the winner. Serpent God-sama shouldn't have any complaints either."

"Hm?"

Izayoi looked at her with a perplexed expression. Then Kuro Usagi added like she remembered something.

"When you compete with a deity in a Gift Game, you normally choose from 3 basic methods. The most popular ones are [Strength], [Knowledge] and [Valour]. When you choose a contest of strength usually a suitable opponent is prepared, but in this case you defeated the deity himself. We will undoubtedly get something wonderful! With this Kuro Usagi's Community can become more powerful than it is now♪"

Kuro Usagi approached the Serpent God with steps like she was about to break into a dance.

But Izayoi was looking at Kuro Usagi seemingly unsatisfied.

"....."

"Wha-What is it Izayoi-san? You have a scary expression, did I offend you in some way?"

"...Nah. What you say is right. The winner gets something from the loser, Gift Games work like that. I have no problem with that, but... Kuro Usagi..."

Izayoi's playful tone and expression was gone entirely. Similarly, Kuro Usagi's expression became tense too.

"You are hiding something critical from the get go, aren't you?"

"....What could you be talking about? If it's something about Little Garden I promised to answer all your questions, similarly anything about Gift Games too--"

"Not that. What I'm asking you about is you lot, .... no ... I will ask questions I'm pretty sure I know the answer to. Why was it so important for you to summon us?"

On the surface Kuro Usagi's expression did not change, but inside she felt intense turmoil.

And that was because Izayoi's question was exactly about what she tried to hide.

"That is... just as I said before. For you to enjoy and live here merrily..."

"Aah, that's right. At first I thought it was purely out of someone's goodwill, or just a joke. I was having an extreme bargain sale of boredom and the other two must have had good enough reasons to come to Little Garden, seeing that neither of them protested at the least. So I didn't concern myself with your situation, but.... To me Kuro Usagi looks desperate somehow."

That was the first time Kuro Usagi let her distress show.

Her eyes trembled and looked back at him like he just hit her where it hurts.

"This is just my hunch, but .... Isn't Kuro Usagi's Community a powerless - or due to some circumstances - a declined team, or something along those lines? So you called us to strengthen the organization. If I assume that this is the case, then your actions right now and that you seriously got mad when I refused to join your Community all makes sense. .... So? Bullseye right?"

"......!"

Kuro Usagi bitterly clicked her tongue in her mind. Having that fact come out at this point would be very inconvenient.

Powerful assets they managed to summon after much hardship, she wanted to avoid letting them go at all costs.

"And you hid this fact from us. Judging by that, we should still be able to choose a different Community, am I on the right track?"

"....."

"Your silence tells me everything Kuro Usagi. If you keep quiet at this point the situation will only get worse. Or is it alright with you if I go to a different Community?"

"No, i-it isn't! Wait a moment please!"

"That's what I'm doing, aren't I? Just tell me everything without keeping anything."

Izayoi sat down on a nearby rock at the riverbank and took a listening pose. But to Kuro Usagi, telling everything about the state of her Community was too big of a risk.

(At least if they would have noticed it after they signed the Community's Admission Agreement--!)

After they signed the Admission Agreement they couldn't have left easily, even if the truth came out. They were planning on having them lend their strength for the bit-by-bit restoration of their Community, but it seems both Jin and Kuro Usagi had terrible luck. The opponents were world-class problem children.

"If you won't tell me anything, then you won't. I'll just have to join some different Community."

"... If I tell you ... Will you assist us?"

"Yeah. If it's interesting enough."

He was laughing loudly, but still, his eyes were not.

Kuro Usagi realized at last that her sight was clouded.

As opposed to the other two girls, who only listened to what Kuro Usagi said, this frivolous looking boy's eyes were intently trying to grasp what [The World of Little Garden] is like.

"....Understood. Then Kuro Usagi will strengthen her resolve and tell you about our Community's terrible situation, as entertainingly as possible."

Kuro Usagi cleared her throat. She was doing this mainly out of desperation.

"Firstly, our Community does not have a [Name] to call itself. Therefore when someone wants to address us, they refer to us with the 'No Name' pseudonym."

"Hee ... Rough treatment, huh? Then?"

"Furthermore, we don't have an Emblem that represents the pride of our Community. This Emblem also fills the important role of indicating the territories of the Community."

"Hmm. Then?"

"Beside the [Name] and [Emblem], we don't have any of our core members anymore. To put it more bluntly, out of the 122 members only Jin-bocchan and Kuro Usagi possesses a Gift powerful enough to participate in Gift Games, the rest are all children under the age of 10!"

"Truly on the brink of destruction, huh!"

"Exactly as you said--♪"

Laughing at Izayoi's composed words, Kuro Usagi bumped her head against her knees with a thump. Saying it out loud, she couldn't help but think that their Community is really at the end of its life.

"And how did it come to that? Is Kuro Usagi's Community functioning as a nursery or something?"

"No, all their parents were abducted. By the hands of the greatest calamity of Little Garden ... a [Demon Lord]."

Hearing the words [Demon Lord], Izayoi, who was only nodding so far, raised his voice for the first time.

"De...Demon Lord!?"

His eyes sparkled like a child who just noticed a new toy in the display window.

"Demon Lord! What the hell, how cool is that!? There is someone in Little Garden who's called by that wonderful name?"

"We-Well ... Yes. But it's probably a little different from Izayoi-san's imagination."

"Really? But if he calls himself Demon Lord, then he must be powerful, diabolical, tough as hell scoundrel that no-one minds if I crush with all I have."

"We-Well ... if you defeat one, you will probably receive a lot of gratitude from a lot of places. Depending on the conditions it may be possible to make one your subordinate after you defeated it."

"Hoo"

"The Demon Lords are certain war deities that belong to a special privileged class in Little Garden who have the authority called [Host Master]. If someone is challenged by them to a Gift Game, it's over, no one can refuse. We were challenged to a Game by a Demon Lord with Host Master authority, forced to participate, and our Community ... was robbed of everything it needs to function as a proper Community."

This wasn't a figure of speech either. Kuro Usagi's Community was robbed of its status, prestige and even all its members. All that remained was ruined vacant land and the children. However Izayoi did not show any signs of sympathy, he only reshuffled his legs while sitting on top of the rock.

"But not having a Name or Emblem is a real shame. What hurts the most is there is nothing to indicate its territory. Can't you make a new one?"

"That...that is..."

Kuro Usagi put both her hands against her chest and stopped speaking.

Izayoi's point was valid. A Community without a Name or Emblem can't display its pride and cannot gain people's trust. The lack of an Emblem in this World of Little Garden means your Community won't be recognized as an organization by others.

That is why Kuro Usagi and the rest had bet their hopes on such a last resort method as summoning new allies from other worlds.

"I-It is possible. However changing its name means the complete dissolution for a Community. But that would be no good! What we want more than anything ... Is to protect the place for our comrades to return to!"

To protect the place for their comrades to return to. That was the first time Kuro Usagi words reflected her true feelings.

To protect the place to return to for the comrades lost in the Game with the [Demon Lord], they vowed to protect the Community, even if it means they will be frowned upon by their surroundings.

"Its a thorny path. But while protecting the place for our comrades to return to, we will slowly rebuild our Community ... and someday, we want to reclaim the Name and Emblem of our Community and display it proudly. To that end there is no choice for us, but to rely on powerful Players like Izayoi-san! Would you lend your impressive strength to our Community.....!?"

"...Phuun. Pride and comrades from the Demon Lord..."

She was asking with a deep bow. In contrast to that Izayoi responded with an apathetic voice to her obligatory confession. His attitude was like he didn't even listen to what Kuro Usagi said.

Kuro Usagi's shoulders dropped and she looked like she was about to cry.

(If he refuses at this point ... our Community will ... )

Kuro Usagi bit her lips. If it leads to such regret, it would have been better to explain everything from the beginning.

The person in question, Izayoi, sluggishly rearranged his crossed legs and after a good 3 minutes of silence,

"Sounds fun, that."

"..... Huh?"

"Don't 'Huh?' me. I said I will cooperate. Be a bit happier, Kuro Usagi.", said Izayoi sounding displeased.

The dazed Kuro Usagi asked 3-4 times more while standing up.

"E....W-what? Is this where this was headed?"

"It was. Or you don't need me? If you say rude things I will really go somewhere else."

"Do-Don't do that, don't do that, you absolutely mustn't do that! We need Izayoi-san!"

"Honesty is best. Go wake up that snake quickly and get that Gift. After that we will go see the waterfall at the end of the river and the [Edge of the World]."

"Ye-Yes!"

Kuro Usagi joyfully hopped on top of the Serpent God and moved close to its jaw.

Izayoi was looking at them discussing something in the distance, when suddenly a blueish light filled the surroundings. When the slowly moving source of the light finally transferred from the head of the Serpent God to Kuro Usagi's hands, she hopped back to in front of Izayoi.

"Kyaa-Kyaa-Kyaa-♪ Look! We received a sapling of a water tree this large! If we have this we won't have to buy water from other Communities! This will help everyone a great deal!"

She was jumping around screaming 'ukyaa♪' while hugging a sapling of a tree called a water tree. Izayoi wasn't familiar with the circumstances of the Community or Little Garden, but it seemed very important to Kuro Usagi.

"It's good that you like it that much, but can I ask you something?"

"Go ahead, go ahead! I will answer not just one, but even three or four of your questions if you want-♪."

"That is very fat bellied of you."

"Who are you calling fat bellied!?"

Getting angry, being happy, she was a very busy bunny.

"Well it's an unimportant question, but if you wanted that thing so much why didn't you challenge this snake? As far as I can see, you seem far stronger than him."

She showed a bit surprised reaction, but then her eyes became melancholic.

"Aah ... about that. The reason behind that comes from the fact that Rabbits are called the [Highborn of Little Garden]. Rabbits possess a special privilege, like [Host Master], but it's called [Judge Master]. If someone with [Judge Master] authority serves as a referee for a Game, neither of the participants can break the rules of the Gift Game--, or more accurately, the defeat of the rule breaker is immediately decided."

"Hee. That's a good deal. That means if we conspire with Kuro Usagi we will be unbeatable in Gift Games."

"That is not what I'm saying at all! Breaking the rules = Defeat. Rabbits' eyes and ears are connected to the center of Little Garden. That means regardless of a Rabbit's will, defeat is decided, and the Chips can be collected. And if you try to sway the verdict with force, then..."

"Then...?"

"We self-destruct."

"You self-destruct...?"

"In spectacular way too! As a compensation to having the rights of [Judge Master], there are a few [Constraints] in place.

- First. After serving as a referee for a Gift Game, counting 15 days, cannot participate in other Gift Games.
- Second. Cannot participate without the Host's approval.
- Third. Cannot participate in a Game situated outside Little Garden.

Well there are more, but the main reasons why I couldn't challenge Serpent God-sama to a Game is those three. Besides Kuro Usagi's referee work was the Community's only income, inevitably there were not many opportunities to participate in the Community's Games."

"I see. Even with considerable abilities, if you can't participate, then there is nothing you can do."

He shrugged his shoulders and started walking down the riverbank.

He was heading for the Great Waterfall of Tritonis at the Edge of the World. Kuro Usagi, who was carrying the sapling of a water tree which was around as tall as her, caught up to him with a short jog.

"Kuro Usagi also has a question for you, Izayoi-san."

"Denied. Just kidding. Let's hear it."

"Eh? Ah, ok. Why did Izayoi-san decide to cooperate with us?"

"Hm... . I could give you a straight answer, but that would be no fun. I will change the question slightly. Why do you think I want to see the [Edge of the World]?"

Kuro Usagi pretended to ponder the question while taking long steps.

"Is it .... Because it's fun, as expected? Izayoi-san is a self-proclaimed hedonist after all."

"Half right. Then why is it that I've found it fun?"

Mumu~. This time Kuro Usagi was seriously thinking about the answer.

"It’s time-out."

"There was a time limit!? Y-You can't do that! Adding a time limit for a Game is against the rules, unless it's done beforehand!"

"Are you serious? Then Kuro Usagi will self-destruct now?"

"Why would I self-destruct now!?"

Izayoi kept moving onward, teasing Kuro Usagi in the process.

Four hours have passed since the three of them - Izayoi, Asuka and Yō - were summoned to Little Garden. The sun was setting steadily and it was almost evening.

"So, at the end what is the right answer for your question?"

"Let's see... To put it simply, it's because there is a sense of adventure to it. In my world our predecessors took part in every possible kind of adventures, almost none were left that was suited for me. So I thought, if it's a different world, then there may still be some amazing ones left that are worthy of me. In other words, going to see the [Edge of the World] is for stocking up on the necessary thrill for me to survive, or something like that."

"I-I see. Izayoi-san wants to feel the thrill of adventure, am I right?"

"Yeah. Living for the thrills is the basis of being a hedonist, isn't it?"

"I see.... Nn? Then the reason you are lending your strength to Kuro Usagi is-?"

"It's become quite dark already. If the sun goes all the way down, we might not see the rainbows. Let's hurry."

She hurriedly went after Izayoi who changed his walking pace.

Even after sundown a great view is a great view, but Izayoi probably wants to witness it both before and after the sunset.

Watching the sun set, Izayoi murmured.

"It seems the sun revolves around the world, like in the Ptolemaic theory..."

"You realized it? That sun is genuine god-made sun that revolves around Little Garden. They say in the Upper Echelons of Little Garden there is a Game for the command right of the sun."

"That is quite something. I would really want to participate in that someday."

To Kuro Usagi the laughing Izayoi looked genuinely delighted for the first time.

After that they walked for another half-an-hour before reaching the Great Waterfall of Tritonis at last.

"Oohhh----!"

The waterfall of Tritonis was dyed crimson basking in the light of the sunset, the violent spraying of water created a myriad of rainbows.

The elliptic looking mouth of the river continued on to the distance far away, the flowing water ran over the [Edge of the World] and fell down to the endless sky beneath.

Kuro Usagi explained while enduring the wind and the water spray falling from the cliffside.

"So, how is it? This is the Great Waterfall of Tritonis, its width is around 2800m. There probably wasn't a waterfall like this one in Izayoi-san's world, right?"

"--Aah. It's honestly amazing. So it's around two times the width of Niagara. What is it like below this [Edge of the World]? Is it carried by a huge turtle after all?"

According to one of the first theories, the world is not spherical, instead it floats on water, on the back of a huge turtle. Izayoi was probably thinking about that.

Izayoi stuck his head out happily over the cliff expecting to find a huge turtle.

He imagined something like a dark abyss below, but only saw the same sunset sky below the cliff and everywhere else.

"Sadly that is not the case. Supporting this world are pillars known as [World Axes]. Nobody knows exactly how many of them there are, but one of them pierces Little Garden, it's that huge column over there. There is a legend that says the reason behind Little Garden existing in this incomplete form is because somewhere someone pulled one of the [World Axes] out and took it home, but..."

"Hahaa, that's amazing. Then we should be thankful to that big idiot."

Watching the Great Waterfall of Tritonis dyed darker crimson as the sun was slowly going down, Izayoi suddenly asked Kuro Usagi a question, as if he just remembered it.

"The Great Waterfall of Tritonis, was it? Is Atlantis at the upstream of this river of something?"

"Hm, I wonder. Besides the vastness of the World of Little Garden that has a surface area of a sun, Kuro Usagi is not that familiar with the state of the outside of Little Garden. Nonetheless-- , if we move our headquarters to the Upper Echelons of Little Garden, there may be available documents there with information about that."

"Haah, 'If you want to find out, keep helping us until then.' is it?"

"No, no. If you seek adventures, then this is Kuro Usagi's recommendation."

"Well thanks, that is very kind of you."

Izayoi started searching for a spot to enjoy the great view from, then he started speaking suddenly.

"Well, you called me out to this nonsensical and fun looking world. I will do my part for that. But I won't help you persuade the other two. I don't mind if you trick or deceive them, but I'd prefer if it didn't cause trouble in the future. If we want get by as part of the same team, then even more so."

"....I understand."

Kuro Usagi had a deep regret in her heart.

Yes, they are allies who will be fighting alongside each other in the same Community. By trying to take advantage of them just because they are problem children, they would just lose all the trust they would otherwise be able to gain.

The importance of the Community made Kuro Usagi forget about this fact. That was extremely rude towards those new comrades.

(Should have explained it all at the beginning... I wonder if Jin-bocchan is all right?)

## Part 4

The time was half-an-hour before Kuro Usagi and Izayoi met up with each other again.

At a sidewalk cafe of the Fountain Plaza, Asuka and Yō summarized what they've learned from listening to the explanation regarding the Community, holding their cups in one hand.

"I see. I understand more or less. In other words [Demon Lord] is a term used for deities and such, who brandish their special rights in this world, and Jin-kun's Community was toyed around and destroyed by them. Something like that?"

"Indeed, my lady. Deities do like cheeky humans since ancient times after all. Breaking something you love too much at the end is a common occurrence."

Galdo Gasper spread his arms wide laughing ironically while sitting on the sidewalk cafe's chair.

"They've lost their Name, Emblem and all their main forces. All that remains is an extensive part of land in the residential zone. If they would've formed another Community when that happened, then the previous Community would've been remembered as remarkable. Now they are nothing more than another nameless and dishonored Community."

"..."

"Think about it for a bit. What can even a Community do that is not allowed to name itself? Trade? Being a Host? No one will trust an organization without a Name. Then participating in Gift Games? Yes, that is certainly possible. But will talented Gift Bearers gather to a Community that allowed its prestige and pride to decline so much?"

"Indeed. Probably nobody would want to join."

"Yes. He is nothing but a shameless ghost of the past clinging to their former glory, holding an impossible dream."

He was inelegantly laughing loudly at Jin and his Community, almost ripping his colorful tuxedo.

Jin's face was bright red and his hands were in a grip on his lap.

"There is more. He talks about rebuilding his Community, but he is just a parasite relying on Kuro Usagi to support their Community."

"..."

"I really pity poor Kuro Usagi. Rabbits possess so many powerful Gifts that they are called the [Highborns of Little Garden], any Community would welcome them happily with open arms. Having a Rabbit to a Community means a great deal. And yet every day she runs around wrecking herself for those stupid brats, supporting that weakling Community, getting by only on her meager income."

"...I see. I understand the situation. Then Galdo-san, why is that you told us about this so politely?"

Asked Asuka with a hidden meaning behind her words. Galdo noticed that and laughed.

"I will say it outright. Will you come to my Community together with Kuro Usagi if you please?"

"Wha-What are you saying Galdo Gasper!?"

Jin Russel hit the table in his anger and protested.

But Galdo Gasper ferociously stared back at Jin.

"Shut up, Jin Russel. If you would've changed your Name and Emblem in the first place, at least some people would've remained. You corner your own Community with your selfishness, yet you dare summon people from another world?"

"Tha-That is..."

"Did you think you could deceive someone who doesn't know anything? And if as a result you would make them bear the same hardship as Kuro Usagi .... , then as a resident of Little Garden I have a duty to warn you."

Pierced by the same kind of beast-like gaze as before, Jin faltered a bit.

But even more than Galdo's words, his sense of guilt for his inexcusable behaviour towards Asuka and Yō has made his heart heavy.

Jin's Community was in that dire situation.

"....So, how about it ladies? I won't ask you to respond immediately. You have 30 days of freedom in Little Garden you can take to decide before joining a Community. You should inspect the Community that summoned you and our Community, [Fores Garo], then after careful consideration--"

"No need. I am perfectly satisfied with Jin-kun's Community."

'Ha?' Jin and Galdo were trying to discern her motives from her expression.

As if nothing special happened Asuka drank the leftover contents of her cup and turned to Yō with a smile.

"What does Kasukabe-san think about all this?"

"Not much, I'm fine with either. I only came to this world to make friends after all."

"Oh, how unexpected. In that case, can I nominate myself for the position of friend number one? We are polar opposites, but somehow I feel we would get along surprisingly well."

Yō silently thought about it for a little while, then nodded with a slight smile.

"...Yeah. Asuka is different than the other girls I know, so it may be all right."

*"I'm happy for you ojou! I'm so happy ojou made a friend I'm tearing up."*

The calico cat was moved to tears.

The two of them were getting excited without the two leaders.

Galdo's expression stiffened from being ignored completely, then coughed while trying to maintain composure.

"Excuse me, but can you tell me the reason--"

"As I said I am perfectly satisfied. As you heard Kasukabe-san only came here to make friends, she is fine with either Jin-kun or Galdo-san. Right?"

"Yeah."

"And myself, Kudou Asuka, I forsake my wealthy household, my guaranteed future, a life that most people would long for and came to Little Garden. Did you really think I would find the insincere invitation of a small-scale organization that only rules a tiny bit of territory that appealing? If so, then you should try again once you recognize your limitations, you phony tiger-gentleman."

She flat out refused.

Galdo Gasper was trembling from rage. As a self-proclaimed gentleman he was probably desperately trying to find suitable words to respond to Asuka's extremely insulting statements.

"W-...Wait a second my lady-"

"**Silence!**"

Clash! Galdo's mouth closed violently in an unnatural seeming way and fell silent.

He seemed confounded, desperately trying to open his mouth, but no sound came out.

".....!?..!??"

"I was not done talking. There are still things I have to ask of you. **Sit right there and keep answering my questions!**"

Asuka's words held power, this time he sat down so forcefully cracks appeared in the chair.

Galdo was panicking.

He didn't know how she did it, but the freedom of his limbs were stolen, he couldn't resist in the slightest.

The startled cat-eared shopkeeper came rushing over to them.

"P-Please keep your quarrels outside of this store-"

"You came at the perfect time. I would like Cat-Shopkeeper-san to witness this as a third-party. You will probably hear many interesting things."

After calming the Cat-Eared shopkeeper, she continued speaking.

"You said you challenged this area's Communities to a contest where both parties have to agree and won all of them. But that is somewhat different from the Gift Games I have heard about. Games between Communities should consist of a Host and the challengers, both betting various chips. ... Hey, Jin-kun. Betting the whole Community as a chip is that common?"

"O-Only if there is no other way, on rare occasions. But that is the same as betting the whole existence of the Community itself, a very rare case."

The Cat-Eared shopkeeper nodded in agreement.

"I figured as much. Even we know that and we just barely arrived here. Being able to force fights between Communities is exactly why those with the Host Master privilege are feared as a Demon Lord. Why is that you, who does not possess that privilege, were able to force those important contests where one has to risk their whole Community, one after the other? **Will you please tell us?**"

Galdo Gasper's face looked like he was about to scream, but against his will he started speaking.

Nearby people slowly started to realize the reason behind the disturbance.

In other words, the fact that no one can disobey this young lady, Kudou Asuka's orders.

"There are many ways to force them. The easiest one is kidnapping women and children from the opponent's Community and blackmailing them. We left the ones who didn't respond to that for later, then gradually absorbed all the others and forced the remaining ones into circumstances where they couldn't help but accept the challenge to a Game."

"Well, that is about what I expected. It is a simple plan fitting for a small fry such as you. However, will the members of the organization you absorbed in this shady way work for you obediently?"

"We took a few children as hostages from every Community."

One of Asuka's eyebrows twitched slightly.

Her manner of speaking or expressions didn't change, but the atmosphere around her gave off a sense of foreboding. Even Yō who was indifferent about the choice of Communities looked at him with narrowed eyes like she's looking at something nasty.

"....I see. More and more despicable. Then where are those children confined at the moment?"

"Already killed them."

The atmosphere around them froze in an instant.

Jin, the shopkeeper, Yō and even Asuka doubted their ears for a moment and didn't know what to think. Only Galdo Gasper continued speaking obeying the order he received.

"On the first day when we took the brats their crying really pissed me off so I killed them all without thinking. After that I tried to be more careful after taking them, but 'I miss my daddy' , 'I want my mummy', their crying irritated me so much I killed them after all. After that I settled on dealing with the brats on the same day they arrive. But if they find out I killed someone from those Communities it would break the organization. So a trusted subordinate took the bodies of those dead brats and at-
"

"**Shut up!**"

Clang! Galdo's mouth closed even faster than before.

Asuka's voice became even more dreadful as she cracked down on Galdo like she was trying to squeeze his soul.

"Amazing. One rarely meets an epitome of evil such as yourself. As expected of Little Garden, the home for inhuman creatures. Right Jin-kun?"

He was a bit flustered from Asuka's chilly gaze, but he denied it quickly.

"Such evildoer is rare even in Little Garden."

"Is that so? That is a bit of a shame. ... By the way, with this confession can the law of Little Garden punish this scum?"

"It's problematic. Of course it's against the law to take hostages from declined Communities or kill the comrades of his followers, but .... if he escapes to outside of Little Garden before the law can judge him, then it's over."

That can be taken as a form of punishment in and of itself. If Galdo as the leader leaves the Community, it's clear that Fores Garo which is nothing but a disorderly mob, will break up.

But Asuka wasn't satisfied with only that.

"I see. Then there is nothing we can do."

She irritatedly snapped her fingers.

That must've been the sign.

The power that restrained Galdo vanished and the freedom of his limbs returned to him.

Galdo mad with anger smashed the cafe table.

"Y-You little biiitch!!"

Along with his loud roar, his body underwent radical changes. The tuxedo covering his huge body was ripped apart by his expanding back muscles, and the hair on his body changed colors to an emerging black and yellow striped pattern.

His Gift was a close breed to something like a werewolf. He was part of a mixed race called the weretigers.

"You bitch, I don't know what you're thinking ... but you know who stands behind me, right!? I'm under the protection of the Demon Lord that protects the Number 666th Gate of Little Garden!! If you pick a fight with me, that means you pick a fight with him too! Do you know what tha-"

"**Silence!** I was not done talking."

Clang! Once again his mouth closed vehemently. But his rage couldn't be stopped solely by that anymore.

Galdo raised his thick, log-like arms and attacked Asuka.

Yō stepped in between them.

"Fighting is bad."

She caught one of his arms, then twisted it further, causing his huge body to turn around and pinned him down.

"Gi...!"

Galdo's eyes were opened wide by the unexpected strength that the girl's thin arms exhibited.

Only Asuka was laughing happily.

"Now, Galdo-san. I do not care who you have behind your back. The same could probably be said about Jin-kun too. After all his final aim is to defeat the Demon Lord that destroyed his Community."

Hearing those words Jin took a deep breath. In reality, Jin almost lost to fear when the Demon Lord was mentioned, but hearing Asuka mention his goals helped him get back to his usual self.

"...Yes. Our final aim is to defeat the Demon Lord and regain our pride and comrades. Those kind of threats won't work on us anymore."

"There you have it. This means you have no way to avoid your destruction."

"Shi-Shit...!"

For unknown reasons Galdo, who was pinned down by Yō, lay on the ground unable to move.

After Kudou Asuka regained her composure somewhat, she lifted Galdo's chin with the tip of her foot, then said with a mischievous smile:

"However. I will not be satisfied by only your Community's demise. A scum like you must be torn to shreds and punished, while you regret all your sins. ... But there is a proposition I have for all of you here."

Jin and the shop employees nodded to Asuka's words, glanced at each other and tilted their head.

Asuka pulled the tip of her foot away and this time she grabbed Galdo's chin with her feminine, pretty fingertips.

"Let us play a Gift Game. With the continued existence of your 'Fores Garo' and the pride and soul of the 'No Names' on the line."

# Chapter 3

## Part 1

They met at the water fountain plaza as the sun was going down and, having heard what happened, Kuro Usagi's rabbit ears were standing on end as usual in her anger. Storm-like preaching and questioning flew about in response to the sudden development.

"H-How did you come into contact with the leader of 'Fores Garo' and even manage to pick a fight in that short amount of time!?" "Moreover, the Game's appointed date is tomorrow!?" "And to be battling in the enemy's territory!" "We don't have the time or money to prepare!" "Just what were you thinking!" "Are you listening, you three!!"

"""We pissed him off. We're currently reflecting on our actions."""

"Silence!!!"

Kuro Usagi raged at the excuse that seemed to have been coordinated beforehand, possibly under somebody's suggestion.

Izayoi who was watching that with a smirk, delivered the finisher.

"It should be fine. It's not like they were indiscriminately picking a fight, so forgive them."

"Y-You may be thinking it's fine as long as it's interesting but the only thing we get from this Game is self-satisfaction, you know? Look at this [Geass Roll]."

The [Geass Roll] Kuro Usagi showed was a Gift necessary for those without a [Host Master] to become a [Host] and begin a Game.

The Game's details, rules, wagers and prizes were written on it and it was sealed with the signature of the leader of the [Host]'s community. The contents of the prize section that Kuro Usagi was pointing at went like this.

"[Should the Players win, the Host shall admit to all the crimes referred to by the Players and, after abiding by the judgment of Little Garden's laws, the Community will be dissolved.] --- Well, it certainly is self-satisfying. Since if we let time pass, we'll be deliberately taking on the risk that we'll lose the proof to substantiate our claims."

As a side note, Asuka's group's wager was [Toleration of the Crime]. It wasn't just related to this time; they would need to continue keeping their silence.

"But as long as time passes, then their crime will definitely be exposed. After all, the crucial children are.....well,"

Kuro Usagi faltered. She had also heard about [Fores Garo]'s bad reputation but had not thought the situation would have deteriorated to such terrible conditions.

"That's right. The hostages are no longer of this world. If we push that point, the evidence will surely come up. But it's also true that that would take a little bit of time. We don't want to have that lag before we pass judgment on that scum."

The laws of Little Garden were, in the end, only applicable within the bounds of Little Garden City. Outside that was a lawless region where various races' communities lived under their respective laws and rules.

If he escaped there, he could no longer be judged under Little Garden's laws. But with the compulsory fulfillment afforded by the [Geass Roll], they would be able to chase Galdo no matter how far he ran using the powerful [Geass].

"There's more, Kuro Usagi. I can't allow scum like that to be so close to my daily life because of my morals and such. If we let him run away now, he'll definitely come gunning for us again."

"W, well.....It may be troublesome if we were to let him run."

"I also don't want to let Galdo run. A villain like him must not be allowed to roam free."

Jin showed that he shared the same opinion, and Kuro Usagi nodded, having conceded.

"Haa~..... You all just can't be helped. Well, fine. I also agree that he's irritating. For something of [Fores Garo]'s level, just Izayoi-san alone guarantees an easy win."

That was Kuro Usagi's honest appraisal. However, Izayoi and Asuka put on puzzled expressions and,

"What are you saying? I won't be going, you know?"

"Of course. I won't let you participate."

The two snorted. Kuro Usagi flared up at them in a fluster.

"Th-That's no good! You're comrades from the same Community, so you have to cooperate with each other."

"It's not that, Kuro Usagi."

Izayoi had a serious face on as he stopped Kuro Usagi with his right hand.

"Listen well. They were the ones that **picked** this fight and the other guys **accepted** it. It would be bad mannered from me to interfere."

"Oh my, you understand it quite well."

".....Ahh, jeez, do as you wish."

Having been toyed around with the entire day, Kuro Usagi was already exhausted and lacked the energy for a retort.

It's just a Game where we won't lose anything so it's fine whatever happens, she muttered with drooping shoulders.

Part 2

Kuro Usagi stood up from her seat and took the water tree sapling left beside her into her arms with great care.

Kuro Usagi cleared her throat and pulled herself together before beginning to speak.

"It's about time to go. Truthfully, we had a booking at a wonderful restaurant and various other things set up to welcome you all but.....Due to an unforeseen incident, we'll have to cancel those for today. We'll welcome you properly at a later date."

"It's fine, you don't have to push yourselves. Our Community is already in a critical state, right?"

The surprised Kuro Usagi looked to Jin without a moment's delay. His apologetic face conveyed that their circumstances had become known. Red up to her rabbit ears, Kuro Usagi lowered her head bashfully.

"M, my apologies. I felt awkward deceiving you all but.....Kuro Usagi and the rest were also desperate."

"It's fine already. I don't care about the level of the group. How about Kasukabe-san?"

Kuro Usagi timidly peeked at Yō's face. Yō shook her head indifferently.

"I'm not angry either. To begin with, I don't really care about what the Community is like.....ah, there is one thing."

Seeming like she just remembered something, Yō muttered hesitantly. Jin leaned on the table and inquired.

"Please ask without restraint. If it is within our power, then it is the least we could do."

"I, it's nothing major. It's just that I.....thought it would be great if I could have three meals a day, a bath and a place to sleep."

Jin's facial expression froze. To obtain water in Little Garden, one had to either buy it or draw it from the large river several kilometers away. On this plot of land that made securing water difficult, a bath was a first-class luxury.

Surmising that, Yō was about to hastily retract her words, when Kuro Usagi joyfully presented the water tree she was holding.

"If that's all, then it's fine! Izayoi-san obtained a water tree sapling this large! With this, we don't have to buy water and the canal will be revived♪"

Her face completely changed to a beaming one. Asuka also looked relieved by this.

"In my country, water was abundant so I bathed every day, but the culture really changes with the location. I was unreasonably tossed into a lake today, so I absolutely wanted to take a bath."

"I agree. I don't want to be welcomed like that a second time."

"Au.....th, that was outside of my control....."

Kuro Usagi was intimidated by the summoned three's looks that seemed to be attacking her. Jin smiled wryly beside her.

"Ahaha.....then shall we return to the Community?"

"Ah, Jin-bocchan, please return ahead of us. The Game is tomorrow so I'd like to get everyone's Gifts appraised by [Thousand Eyes]. There's also the matter of this water tree."

"[Thousand Eyes]? Is that a Community's name?"

"Yes. [Thousand Eyes] is an aggregation of communities that each possesses a special kind of [Eye]. It is a massive mercantile Community that is well-informed about every corner of Little Garden, both the Upper Echelons and the Lower Levels. Fortunately, there is a branch store nearby."

"What is this about the appraisal of Gifts?"

"Of course, that would be about their hidden powers or origins. If you have a correct understanding of your ability, you can further draw out its power. You're all curious about the origin of your abilities, right?"

The three showed a complex expression in response to Kuro Usagi who was seeking agreement. They each had their own thoughts but voiced no objections, so Kuro Usagi, Izayoi, Asuka and Yō headed to the [Thousand Eyes].

On the way, Izayoi, Asuka and Yō gazed upon the townscape with great interest.

Peribed Road, which led to the shop, was made of stone and the trees alongside it were scattering pink flowers as buds and new leaves were beginning to grow.

Looking at the tree-lined street lit by dusk and the city's lamps, Asuka murmured in amazement.

"Cherry blossoms.....or not? Their petals are different and they shouldn't be blooming in midsummer."

"No, it's still early summer. It's not strange that there are some lively cherry blossoms left."

".....? I thought it was autumn."

Hm? And the three who were out of sync exchanged glances and tilted their heads. Kuro Usagi smiled and explained.

"Each of you was summoned from a separate world. Outside of your original time axis, history, culture and the ecosystem as well as some other things will be different."

"Ohh? You mean parallel worlds?"

"That's close. The true term would be the Ring of Intersecting Concurrent Worlds.....but if I were to start explaining that now, it would take more than a day or two, so we'll leave it for another opportunity."

Speaking ambiguously, Kuro Usagi turned towards them. It seemed that they had arrived. On the shop's banner, two goddesses depicted facing each other on the blue cloth. That was probably the 'Thousand Eyes' banner.

Kuro Usagi tried to stop the female shop clerk who was taking down the signboard at the end of the day,

"Wai-"

"Waiting won't happen, dear customer. We don't do after business hours."

.....She couldn't voice her attempt to stop her. Kuro Usagi leered at the store clerk, vexed.

They truly were an economic giant. There was no flaw in their refusal of pushy customers.

"How devoid of mercantile spirit this shop is."

"I, I concur! To close their doors on a customer five minutes before closing!"

"You may head elsewhere if you have complaints. You are hereby forbidden from associating with us. You are banned."

"Banned!? To be issuing a ban over something like this, aren't you treating your customers with too much contempt!?"

The shop clerk dealt with Kuro Usagi, who was raising a commotion, with a scornful voice and cold eyes.

"I see; flat-out ignoring a rabbit who is a [Highborn of Little Garden] is rude. I will ask for authorization inside, so could I have the name of your Community?"

"".....Uu."

In a complete reversal, Kuro Usagi faltered. However, Izayoi gave the name without hesitation.

"We're a [No Name] Community."

"Oho. Then which [No Name]-sama would that be. Could you allow me to confirm your Banner?"

He stopped speaking. The risk of Communities without a [Name] or [Banner Emblem] surely this kind of thing.

(This is bad. The [Thousand Eyes] shop rejected the [No Name]. At this rate, we'll really end up being banned.)

Because they were a powerful shop, they chose their customers. They wouldn't assume the risks that dealing with an untrustworthy customer would entail.

Everyone's gazes focused on Kuro Usagi. She made a face that showed she was frustrated from the bottom of her heart and muttered in a small voice.

"That's.....umm.....we don't have a Bann-"

"Yaaaahooooooooo! It's been a while, Kuro Usagiiiiii!"

Kuro Usagi was hugged (perhaps it could be called a flying body attack) by the pure white-haired girl in kimono-like attire that came running wildly from the shop interior, and they flipped four times in midair, flying as far as the aqueduct on the other side of the main road.

"Kyaa----------.....!"

Sploosh. And a scream that was growing distant.

Izayoi rolled his eyes and the shop clerk's face winced.

"......Hey, clerk. Does this shop have a service for surprising people? Then please try a different version for me, by all means."

"There is none."

"I'll pay for it, if there is none."

"I won't do it."

Izayoi had a serious expression and the clerk flat-out rejected it with a serious expression. Both were serious.

The white-haired girl who had performed a flying body attack on Kuro Usagi buried and rubbed her face in her chest.

"Shi-Shiroyasha-sama!? Why are you here at such a low level!?"

"Obviously because I had a premonition that Kuro Usagi would be coming by around now! Fufu, fuhohofuhoho! The sensation of touching a rabbit is truly different! Come now, does it feel good here, or here!"

Fondle, fondle, fondle, fondle.

"Shi-Shiroyasha-sama! Pl-Please let go of me!"

Tearing off the girl called Shiroyasha by force, she gripped her head and threw her towards the shop.

The girl who was spinning vertically was stopped by Izayoi's foot.

"Hnn."

"Gobaa! Wh-Who are you who would use his foot to stop a beautiful girl he's just met and flew towards him?"

"Izayoi-sama. Let's get along from now on, Loli in Japanese clothing."

Izayoi laughed with a yahaha while introducing himself. Asuka, who had been dumbfounded by the chain of events, seemed to remember something and talked to Shiroyasha.

"Are you from this store?"

"Ohh, that's right. I am Shiroyasha-sama, one of the leaders of the [Thousand Eyes], young lady. If it's a job-related request, then I will take care of it for one touch of that comparatively well-developed chest."

"Owner. We won't profit like that. The boss will get angry."

With her ever-calm voice, the female clerk drove in a nail.

Kuro Usagi, who wrung her soaked clothes and miniskirt as she climbed out of the canal, murmured with mixed emotions.

"Uu.....I didn't think even I would get wet."

"Divine retribution.....perhaps."

"Just as she said."

Kuro Usagi wrung her clothes while seeming sad.

On the other hand, Shiroyasha didn't mind being soaked at all as she looked around at Izayoi and the rest, who were in front of the shop, with a mischievous smile.

"Fufun. So you're Kuro Usagi's new companions. That people from another world have come before me means.....Kuro Usagi will finally come to my bed."

"No, it doesn't! That will never happen, no matter what!"

Kuro Usagi's rabbit ears stood on end in her anger. Shiroyasha, whose degree of seriousness for that last statement couldn't be ascertained, invited them into the shop with a smile.

"Well, that's fine. If you have something to ask, then I'll hear about it in the shop."

"Is that alright? They are [No Name] without a Banner. The regulations."

"I apologize for this ill-natured clerk who would ask for a name whilst knowing that you are [No Name]. I'll vouch for them, so if you're glared at by the boss, I'll take responsibility. So come on in."

The female clerk sulked. She was simply abiding by the rules, so it couldn't be helped that she had offended them. The five that passed under the shop curtain while glaring at the female clerk entered an unnaturally wide courtyard that was unthinkable when viewing the shop from outside.

If one looked at the front entrance, various rare masterpieces were lined up behind a show window.

"Unfortunately, the shop is closed. Forgive me for conducting this in my own room."

The five advanced across the Japanese style courtyard and stopped at the open corridor.

Behind the sliding paper doors, the room the four were invited to had things that seemed to be incense burning, and the smell which was carried on the wind titillated their noses.

Shiroyasha, who sat at the seat of honor in this room which was somewhat wide for a private room, stretched greatly and then turned to face Izayoi and the others. If one were to realize it, her kimono had dried off at some point.

"I'll introduce myself once again. I am Shiroyasha, the leader of the [Thousand Eyes] which is based at the fourth gate, number 3345. I have a little history with Kuro Usagi over there. I'd like you to think of me as a beautiful girl that has been helping out frequently ever since the collapse of her Community."

"Yes, yes, we've truly been in your care."

Kuro Usagi warded off the casual words. Beside her, Yō tilted her head and asked.

"What is that gate thing?"

"It is the gate on the outer wall that exists to indicate Little Garden's levels. As the number becomes lower, the strength of those living there increases."

This place, Little Garden, was split into seven levels from the upper levels to the lower ones, and a number was assigned to each gate which served to divide those.

Counting from the outer wall, there was the seventh gate, the sixth, and as one went further in, the number would decrease accompanied by an increase in strength.

Once one made it to the fourth gate, fighting gods would be defending so it was a demonic place outside the realm of humans.

The sky view map of Little Garden that Kuro Usagi drew was split into many multiple layers by the gates.

".....An extremely large onion?"

"No, wouldn't it be an extremely large baumkuchen?"

"That's true. If I had to say which, it would be a baumkuchen."

The three nodded in agreement. Kuro Usagi's shoulders sank in response to their blunt thoughts.

On the other hand, Shiroyasha was roaring with laughter as she nodded over and over.

"Fufu, that's a good comparison. If we were to use that, then the seven gates would be at the thinnest layer of the baumkuchen. While we're at it, just outside the eastern gate is a place overlooking the [Edge of the World]. Those living there don't belong to a community and are possessors of powerful Gifts --- like the owner of that water tree."

Shiroyasha laughed lightly and looked towards the water tree sapling that Kuro Usagi was holding. What Shiroyasha was indicating was the snake god that was living at Tritonis Waterfall.

"So saying, just who won and in what kind of game? A competition of knowledge? A test of courage?"

"No, no. Izayoi beat that snake god-sama barehanded before coming here."

Kuro Usagi said proudly and Shiroyasha raised a voice of shock.

"What!? He didn't clear a game, but instead beat him head on!? Then that child is a prodigy carrying Divinity?"

"No, I don't think so. Since you would be able to tell with just one glance."

"Mu, that's true. But one should only be able to defeat divinity if one possesses the same Divinity or the power balance between their races has collapsed. If we're comparing the strengths between races, a human is like an acorn to a snake."

Divinity didn't mean that of a natural-born god, but indicated a Gift that transformed the body into one of the highest rank.

If a snake was granted Divinity, it would become a giant snake god.

If a human was granted Divinity, he or she would become a living god or a prodigy.

If an ogre was granted Divinity, it would become a fierce god able to shake heaven and earth.

Also, Divinity would increase the strength of other Gifts. A great deal of the Communities in Little Garden had obtaining divinity as a primary aim in order to fulfill their goals, so they were amassing power, aiming at the higher levels.

"Shiroyasha-sama, were you acquainted with that snake god?"

"Not just an acquaintance or whatever; the one who granted him Divinity was me. Though that's a story from some hundred years ago."

Puffing out her small chest, Shiroyasha laughed heartily.

But hearing that, Izayoi's eyes flashed dangerously as he posed a question.

"Ohh? Then you're stronger than that snake?"

"Fufun, of course. I'm the eastern "Floor Master". There is nobody that can compare with me out of the Communities at the eastern fourth gate and those underneath, since I'm the strongest Host."

[Strongest Host] --- these words made the eyes of Izayoi, Asuka and Yō sparkle simultaneously.

"Yes.....fufu. That is to say, if we were to clear your game, our Community would become the strongest in the east?"

"Of course, that's what it means."

"That sounds great. It saves us time."

The three looked at Shiroyasha with their fighting spirit bared. Shiroyasha seemed to realize that as she gave a high-pitched laugh.

"What shrewd children. While making a request, they challenge me to a Gift Game?"

"Eh? W, wait, you three!?"

Shiroyasha held back the flustered Kuro Usagi with her right hand.

"It's fine, Kuro Usagi. I've also been constantly thirsting for someone to play with."

"You're quick on the uptake. I like that."

"Fufu, I see. ---However, there's one thing I'd like to confirm before the game."

"What is it?"

Shiroyasha drew out from her kimono's sleeve the [Thousand Eyes] banner emblem --- a card with the goddesses turned towards each other, and said one thing with a fierce and gallant smile,

"Is what you desire a [Challenge] or --- possibly a [Duel]?"

In an instant, an explosive change happened in the three's vision.

Their sight lost meaning and various scenes began to revolve in their minds.

What flickered in their minds was a swaying field of golden grains. A white hill peeking out from the horizon. A forest's lake shore.

The places they had no memory of repeated in flux and devoured them starting from their feet.

The place they were thrown into had a snowy field and frozen lake --- **a world where the sun went around horizontally** as well.

"......Wha.....!?"

The three gulped at the excessive abnormality.

The sensation was completely different from the time they had been summoned to Little Garden; it was already a work of god inexpressible through words.

There was a single star in the distant twilight sky. Slowly revolving horizontally around the world, just that one white sun.

It was as if a miraculous power had decided to create one star and one world.

Shiroyasha once again asked the three who were rooted to the spot in blank amazement.

"I will rename myself and ask once again. I am the [Demon Lord of the White Night] --- the celestial spirit of the sun and the white night, Shiroyasha. Is what you desire to [Challenge] a trial? Or an equal-footed [Duel]?"

Demon Lord Shiroyasha. The three gulped once again at the ghastliness that was unthinkable for a girl's smile.

[Celestial Spirits] refer to the master spirits that reside on stars of at least the size of a planet. They are a species of the highest class, such as fairies, demons, devils and so on, and they are also on the [Bestowing Side] of Gifts.

Izayoi focused on Shiroyasha and smiled while taking in the pleasant sensation of cold sweat on his back.

"A sun that revolves around horizontally and.....I see, **white night** and **yasha**. You're representing yourself."

"Indeed. This white night's lake shore and snowy field. The sun that forever casts twilight over this land, they are but one of the Game Boards I have."

Shiroyasha spread her hands and the sea of clouds at the distant horizon split in the blink of an eye, revealing the twilight sun.

The [White Night] celestial spirit. The white night that Izayoi had indicated was something which could be seen in the Scandinavian countries located within specific latitudes, such as Finland and Norway, where the sun would not sink.

And then the [Night Demon] part identified a divine spirit of water and earth as well as a fierce god with the constitution of an evil god.

In Little Garden which had assembled a great multitude of fighting gods, a mix of the strongest and renown [Celestial Spirits] and [Divine Spirits].

She was completely at a level where one could even call her representative of Little Garden --- a powerful [Demon Lord].

"This vast land is just a Game Board.....!?"

"Indeed. And so, your reply is? If it's a [Challenge], I'll play around with you at the level of entertainment. ---However, if it is a [Duel] you seek, then that's a different story. As a Demon Lord, there would be no way but to fight to the limits of my life and pride."

"....."

Asuka and Yō, and even the confident Izayoi, hesitated and didn't give an immediate reply.

They were not sure what Shiroyasha's Gift was. But it was obvious with one glance that there was not a hope of winning. But their pride would not allow them to back down from a fight that they had sold.

After the short-lived silence --- seeming like he'd given up, Izayoi smiled and raised his hands up slowly and,

"I give. I've been had. It's a surrender, Shiroyasha."

"Fumu? Does that mean you're not choosing a duel but a challenge?"

"Yeah. Since you can prepare a Game Board such as this. You have the capabilities. ---Fine then. I'll stay silent this time and **let you test me**, Great Demon Lord."

In response to Izayoi who smiled wryly and spat those words out, Shiroyasha laughed uncontrollably and loudly. Perhaps that was the greatest concession that the prideful Izayoi could make, but 'let you test me' was such an adorable way to be obstinate, so Shiroyasha laughed loudly while holding her stomach.

After laughing for a while, Shiroyasha suppressed her laughter and asked the other two.

"Ku, kuku.....so how about you children?"

".....Yes. It's fine if you test me."

"Same as to my right."

The two answered with extremely sour expressions. Shiroyasha let out a sound of satisfaction.

Kuro Usagi, who had been watching the sequence of events in suspense, placed her hand on her chest and heaved a sigh of relief.

"J, jeez! All of you, please choose your opponents better! Newcomers who are selling a fight with a [Floor Master] and a [Floor Master] who's buying that fight, it's too terrible even as a joke! And Shiroyasha-sama, you being a Demon Lord is something from some thousand years ago!!"

"What? Then I'm a Former Demon Lord?"

"Now then, I wonder if that's how it was?"

Shiroyasha smiled mischievously. Kuro Usagi and the three's shoulders fell.

At that moment, they heard a shrill cry come from the mountain range in the distance. The first one to react to that cry that could be thought to have come from a beast or wild bird was Kasukabe Yō.

"What was that cry just now? It's the first time I've heard it."

"Fumu.....him, huh. He may be most suitable to test you three."

Shiroyasha occasionally beckoned towards the mountain range that laid on the other side of the lake shore. In so doing, a large beast with a body length of around 5 meters spread its wings and glided, arriving before the three like the wind.

Seeing the beast with the wings of an eagle and the lower body of a lion, Kasukabe Yō raised a voice filled with shock and delight.

"A gryphon.....no way, a real one!?"

"Fufun, indeed. He is the king of birds and king of beasts. Embodying [Power], [Wisdom] and [Courage], a beast that represents the Gift Games."

Shiroyasha beckoned him. The gryphon landed in front of her and lowered its head deeply in respect.

"Now comes the main point of the trial. I will test you in [Power], [Wisdom] and [Courage] with this gryphon; I'll make it so you clear it if you can circle the lake shore while riding him."

Shiroyasha took out the card with the crest of the goddesses facing each other. Doing so, the parchment only permitted for [Host Masters] appeared from thin air. Shiroyasha allowed her white finger to move and transcribe onto the parchment.

**<<GIFT GAME NAME: “Gryphon's Reins”>>**

**List of Participant(s):**

***Sakamaki Izayoi**

***Kudou Asuka**

***Kasukabe Yō**

## Clearing Condition(s):

***Circle the lake shore astride the gryphon**

## Clearing Method(s):

* **Gain the gryphon's approval in [Power], [Wisdom] and [Courage]**

## Defeat Condition(s):

***Forfeiting or the Player does not fulfill the above victory condition**

**Oath:** ***Respecting the above, under the pride, banner and Host Master's name, the Gift Game shall commence.***

*"[Thousand Eyes]" Seal*

"I'll do it."

Before the end of the reading or any utterances, Yō had risen her hand such that even her fingertips were straight up. She was gazing at the gryphon with envious eyes. It was an unusually heated look for her who was generally docile.

*"M, miss.....will you be fine? I'm far scarier and bigger than an alphamale lion."*

"I'm fine, there's no problem."

"Fumu. It seems you're quite confident, but this is fairly difficult, you know? If you fail, it won't end with just a grave injury."

"I'm fine, there's no problem."

Yō's eyes faced the gryphon directly. Those eyes were shining like those of a child who had just found a treasure they'd been continuously searching for. Izayoi and Asuka, who were standing beside her, seemed to be surprised as they smiled wryly.

"OK, I'll let you take it. Don't fail."

"Be careful, Kasukabe-san."

"Yeah. I'll do my best."

She nodded and ran up to the gryphon. But the gryphon spread its large wings and moved from that spot.

It was likely so Shiroyasha wouldn't get caught in the battle when it started.

Kasukabe Yō chased after the gryphon that was spreading its wings and letting its eyes shine as if to intimidate her.

She stopped several meters away from the gryphon and observed it fixedly.

(.....Amazing. It really has the upper body of an eagle and the lower body of a lion.)

Eagle and lion. The king of the birds of prey and the king of carnivores. She had communicated with the hearts of many animals until now, but that was only limited to those living on Earth.

It was far removed from the ecosystem in which the unicorn that they had met at the [Edge of the World] and large snake lived in, so this was her first time confronting what were known as imaginary beasts.

"U, umm. Nice to meet you, I am Kasukabe Yō."

*"!?"*

Twitch!! and the gryphon jumped. The wariness in its eyes thinned and a faint amount of bewilderment rose in them. This proved that her Gift was effective on imaginary beasts.

"Ohh.....that girl's communicating with the gryphon, huh."

Shiroyasha spread her folding fan in admiration. There were two methods to ride on the back of the gryphon which was the king of two species.

One was to best them in power or wisdom. This was the method where one rode on their back until they yielded.

The second method was to make it acknowledge one's spirit. This was the method where one straddled them to be recognized by them, the prideful kings with high pride.

Whichever method Kasukabe chose, being able to converse might allow her to further the negotiations in her favor. Kasukabe Yō took a deep breath and made her statement in one go.

"Won't you allow me to ride on your back.....and have a battle with your pride on the line with me?"

*".....What.....!?"*

Fighting spirit swelled within the gryphon's voice and eyes. To they who possessed noble mindsets, having their *"pride on the line"* indicated a challenge whose result was of the utmost importance. Kasukabe Yō continued the negotiations without waiting for a reply.

"You came flying from that mountain range. We'll start from the ground and detour clockwise around there, setting the final destination to be here. You'll run through the sky with your strong wings and legs, and if you throw me off before the lake shore, it's your win. If I'm still riding, then it's my win.....how about it?"

Yō tilted her head. Certainly, both power and courage could be tested under those conditions.

But the gryphon cooed largely in suspicion and pompously asked a question in return.

*"Miss. You have proposed to [wager my pride]. As you have said, my honor would be tainted. ---But, miss. What will you bet in exchange for my pride?"*

"I'll bet my life."

It was an immediate response. Voices of surprise came from Kuro Usagi and Asuka at the extremely wild reply.

"Y, you can't!"

"Ka, Kasukabe-san!? Are you serious!?"

"You will bet your pride. I will bet my life. If I fall off and survive, I will become your dinner.....is that good enough?"

*".....Fumu....."*

Kuro Usagi and Asuka grew increasingly panicked at Yō's suggestion. Shiroyasha and Izayoi held that back with stern voices.

"Both of you, back down. This is a trial she proposed herself."

"Yeah. Stop the unsightly stuff."

"It's not that kind of problem!! Letting a comrade participate in this kind of disadvantageous Game---"

"I'll be fine."

Kasukabe nodded at Asuka and Kuro Usagi as she looked over. There was not a shred of fighting spirit in those eyes. Rather, it was an expression that didn't seem to have a chance of victory.

After the gryphon pondered for a little while, it lowered its head and prompting her to ride upon its back.

*"You may ride, brave young one. Test whether you can withstand the dash of a gryphon with that body of yours."*

Yō nodded, grabbing ahold of the reins and climbing onto its back. There was no saddle so she was a little unsettled, but Yō gripped the reins tightly and flattened herself upon the gryphon.

Yō muttered as if satisfied as she stroked the gryphon's strong and smooth body.

"I'll say one thing before we start.....it was one of my dreams to ride upon your back."

*"---I see."*

Just what was she running her mouth off about before a decisive battle. The gryphon smiled wryly and flapped its wings three times out of embarrassment. As soon as it leaned its body forward, it kicked off the ground and flew into the twilight sky.

(Wah.....!)

Several meters above the ground. The gryphon's eagle wings remained spread out.

The surprising thing was that the gryphon was not propelling itself forward with its wings.

Kasukabe Yō, who realized that immediately, let out an unsuppressed voice of wonder even as she suffered intense pressure bearing down on her.

"Amazing.....! You're **running through the sky**!!!"

Its sharp eagle talons seemed to take hold of the wind.

What was supporting its large body was not its wings. It was using a Gift that manipulated whirlwinds to dash through the sky.

Yes. One might be led by the size to think that their wings could support their body weight which could reach several tons, but wings that would be many times their size and propulsion would be necessary.

These wings were proof that their ecosystem was removed from normal evolution.

Ignoring kinetic laws and running through the air like that was truly deserving of the name of an [Imaginary Beast].

*"Miss. We will be arriving at the mountain range shortly but.....are you sure? If we head towards the mountains at this speed"*

"Yeah. The freezing air has become even colder; it seems to be around minus ten degrees."

After passing the forest and before reaching the mountain range, the gryphon lessened its speed.

The world of the white night was usually cold. That was without even riding on a gryphon's back as it dashed like a gale. The shockwaves and temperature were not something a human could withstand.

This was the ultimatum spawned from the gryphon's conscience. These were words spoken while thinking of Yō's straight-forward attitude. But Kasukabe Yō smiled faintly and returned a provocation in exchange.

"I'm fine. Rather than that, is this okay? You should get serious. Or I'll actually win?"

*".....Very well. Don't regret this, miss!"*

The atmosphere shook in the next moment. Now it was utilizing its wings to manipulate whirlwinds.

The mountain summit that should have been far in the distance was closing in fast.

If she were to look down, she would be able to see the glacier breaking from the shockwaves. Amidst the shockwaves that seemed like they would crush a human instantly, Kasukabe Yō was gritting her teeth and enduring.

Hearing the faint deep breathing on its back, an emotion that was a mix of wonder and bewilderment welled up inside the gryphon.

Such pressure. Such cold. The endurance that she was displaying to withstand this was not something a girl had.

(I see.....so you have a suitable miracle within you.....!)

The gryphon revealed a wry smile. He hadn't known.

That Kasukabe Yō also possessed a top class Gift of humanity just like Izayoi.

When the gryphon went into a nose dive from the summit, its speed just about doubled. The instant it realized that there was no need to hold back, the gryphon mixed in rotating, trying to shake Kasukabe Yō off. It was useless to cling to the saddle-less eagle back. Only the reins could be held onto, so her lower body swam in midair as if it had been abandoned.

"....."!!"

As expected, she couldn't crack jokes anymore. Yō gripped the reins with all her strength and the gryphon rotated with all its strength in order to throw her off. It nosedived until just before the ground, then swung itself to become parallel to the ground.

That was the final turning point. The cold winds from the mountains had stopped and the final part was purely distance.

The gryphon had dashed to the middle of the lake with vigor just like that. The moment Kasukabe Yō's victory was decided --- Kasukabe Yō's hands released the reins.

*"What!?"*

"Kasukabe-san!?"

There was no time to sigh in relief or offer praise. Kasukabe Yō's petite body danced like it had been blown away by a squall and shot forward from the inertia. Kuro Usagi's hand which was moving to help was grabbed by Izayoi.

"L, let go---"

"Wait! It's not over yet!"

Izayoi stopped the impatient Kuro Usagi. But within Kasukabe Yō's mind, all of the surrounding presences had completely disappeared. There was but a single thing left in her mind: the feeling of dashing through the sky from just now.

(With the limbs.....take hold of the wind and step on the air---!)

Kasukabe Yō's body flipped over with a fwoosh. Sluggish movements that seemed to erase her inertia had already decreased her falling speed, and without touching the lake shore, she flew.

".....Wha"

Everyone there was rendered speechless. It was to be expected.

Kasukabe Yō, who hadn't shown that kind of expression until now, floated above the lake shore, wrapped in the wind.

The one who approached Kasukabe Yō, who was flying there with inexperienced movements like those of swimming, was Izayoi who had a smile on like he was surprised.

"As I thought. Your Gift is the type that allows you to obtain the specialties of other living creatures."

Yō's response to the frivolous smile was sullen.

".....That's wrong. This is the proof that we've become friends. But since when did you know?"

"It was just a guess. When we met Kuro Usagi, you said [I'd know if they're upwind]. That's not something a human can do. That's why your Gift isn't talking with animals, but grants the Gifts of other species.....is what I inferred, but it looks like that's not all. Is there anything on Earth that can withstand that speed?”

She turned away to dodge Izayoi's deeply interested gaze. The one who rushed up beside them in an instant was the calico cat. The calico cat that rode upon her shoulder asked Yō worriedly with a shaky voice.

*"Ojou! Are you hurt!?"*

"No, I'm fine. It's only that my fingers are numb and my clothes are wrinkled."

She gently petted the calico cat that came over. Opposite that, Shiroyasha was clapping and the gryphon was looking over with admiration.

*"Splendid. I would like you to use the Gift you received as proof of your victory over me."*

"Yeah. I'll treasure it."

"Oh my, you've done well. This Game is your win.....by the way, I'd like to ask about your Gift. Is it inherited?"

"That's not it. It's thanks to the wood carving I received from my father that I became able to communicate."

"Wood carving?"

The calico cat explained for Shiroyasha who tilted her head.

*"Ojou's father was from a carving family. Ojou is able to speak with us through her father's craft."*

"Hohou.....a carver father. Could I take a look at that wooden carving?"

Yō nodded and took out the round wooden carving that had been made into a pendant.

Shiroyasha looked upon the large, flat wooden carving that she had been handed and suddenly frowned. Asuka and Izayoi also peeked at the wooden carving from beside her.

"It's a complex design. Is there a meaning behind it?"

"There's a meaning, but I don't know it. I was told it a long time ago, but I've forgotten."

"".....This is..."

Not just Shiroyasha, but Izayoi and Kuro Usagi also had docile expressions as they participated in the appraisal. They flipped it over many times and traced the geometric outline that was on the front. Kuro Usagi tilted her head and asked Yō.

"The material is a sacred camphor tree.....? It doesn't seem to have leftover Divinity but.....this geometric outline that converges towards the center.....and this blank space at the center.....did your father have a biologist acquaintance?"

"Yeah. My mother was one."

"A biologist would mean that this really is showing a genealogical tree, Shiroyasha?"

"Most likely.....then this figure is like this.....and the convergence of this circle is.....no, this is.....this is, amazing!! It's truly amazing, young girl!! If this is really man-made, then your father is a super genius of the age of gods! To think a genealogical tree could be completed by human hands, and that it would even grant a Gift! This is a masterpiece that one could call an authentic [Index of Life] without it being exaggerated!"

Shiroyasha's voice was excited. Yō tilted her head in curiosity.

"When you say a genealogical tree, you mean the thing that shows the origin of a living creature and its evolution? But I think that the genealogical tree that my mom made looked more tree-like."

"Umu, that's the form the thing your father wanted to portray took. This wooden carving is specifically a circle to represent the circle of transmigration. Rebirth and death, the genealogy of human life which repeats the circle of transmigration is the center of the circle of continued evolution, which is to say that it seems to continuously aim for the center of the world. The blank center may represent the center of the world which is in continuous flux, or it is because life is not yet complete, or possibly because this work is not yet complete. ---Ununu, amazing. It's amazing. It's been a long time since my power of imagination was stimulated! It's truly artistic! So much so that I would buy it if you would allow me to!"

"You can't."

Yō rejected it immediately and took back the wooden carving. Shiroyasha was as down as a child whose favorite toy had been confiscated.

“So, what power does that Gift hold?”

"I don't know. So far, I know it lets her communicate with other species and allows her to receive the unique Gifts of those she has befriended. Anything else beyond that and there's no way but to ask one of the store's appraisers. On top of that, it's impossible if they're not from the higher floors."

"Eh? Shiroyasha-sama can't appraise it? We wanted to request an appraisal today."

"O, of all things, a Gift appraisal. It's not my specialty, and you could even say it's unrelated to me."

Shiroyasha seemed to have had the intention of performing the request that had been put up as the Game's prize for free. She brushed up her white hair in a troubled manner and looked at the three while hiding her hands within her kimono's sleeves.

"Let's see.....fumufumu.....umu, I know you three are well-educated. But that says nothing for this. How much do each of you know about your Gifts?"

"It's a corporate secret."

"Same as to the right."

"Same as them."

"Uooooi? I understand that, even provisionally, telling somebody that had been your opponent is scary, but the conversation can't continue like this."

"There's no need for anything like an appraisal. I don't have a hobby of attaching values to people."

The other two nodded in agreement to Izayoi's blunt rejection.

Shiroyasha, who was scratching her face in worry, suddenly had an ingenious idea and smirked.

"Fumu. At any rate, as a [Host] and celestial spirit, I must bestow you with a [Gift]. It's a bit excessive, but it works just fine as a celebration before your Community's revival."

Shiroyasha clapped her hands. In so doing, three shining cards appeared in front of the three.

Their respective names were written upon them as well as the name of the Gift that dwelled within them.

On the cobalt blue card: Sakamaki Izayoi - Gift Name [Code Unknown]

On the wine red card: Kudou Asuka - Gift Name [Authority]

On the pearl emerald card: Kasukabe Yō - Gift Name [Genome Tree] [No Former]

They received the cards with their respective names and Gifts.

Kuro Usagi peeked at the three's cards with a shocked and excited face.

"Gift Cards!"

"A Bon gift?"

"A year-end gift?"

"A New Year's gift?"

"Y, you're wrong! Rather, why are the three of you so in sync like that!? A Gift Card is a super high-value Card that can store the manifestation of a Gift! It can even store Yō-san's [Genome Tree] for use whenever she pleases!"

"So you mean it's okay to call it a wonderful item?"

"So why are you just ignoring it so half-heartedly! Ahh, jeez, that's right, it's a super wonderful item!"

While being scolded by Kuro Usagi, the three of them gazed curiously at their respective Cards.

"Normally it would have the emblem of your Community as well, but you're all [No Name]. It's become a slightly messy image, but if you have complaints, please direct them to Kuro Usagi."

"Fuun.....maybe it could also store that water tree?"

He casually turned the card towards the water tree. With that, the water tree became light particles and disappeared into the Card.

Looking at it, Izayoi's card had a picture of a tree overflowing with water added to it, and in the gift field beneath [Code Unknown], [Water Tree] was now listed.

"Ohh? This is interesting. Maybe I can release water like this?"

"You can. Want to try?"

"Y, you can't! I'm against wasting water! Please use that water for the Community's sake!"

He clicked his tongue in disappointment. Kuro Usagi's expression showed that she didn't feel like she could relax yet as she continued to watch Izayoi fervently. Shiroyasha laughed loudly as she observed that.

"That Gift Card's formal name is [Piece of Laplace], that is to say a fragment of omniscience. The Gift Name written there is the name of the [Gift] entwined with your souls. Even without an appraisal, you can understand most of your Gift's identity by looking at that."

"Ohh? Then I guess I'm a rare case?"

Mm? and Shiroyasha peeked at Izayoi's Gift Card. The words [Code Unknown] were certainly inscribed there. In contrast to Izayoi who was laughing yahaha, Shiroyasha's expression had changed dramatically.

".....No, that's impossible."

Shiroyasha's face color changed immediately and she grabbed the Gift Card. There was something uncommon about the mood. Shiroyasha, who was staring at the Gift Card, muttered because of the incomprehensibility.

"[Code Unknown].....? That's impossible, there shouldn't be any errors in the omniscient [Piece of Laplace]."

"At any rate, that means it couldn't be appraised. I like it better this way."

He took the Gift Card back from Shiroyasha. But Shiroyasha stared at Izayoi with a puzzled expression like she just couldn't understand it. There shouldn't be something that would elicit a [Code Unknown] Gift Name.

(Come to think of it, this child.....they said he beat the snake god.)

Outside of natural-born gods and celestial spirits, possessors of Divinity were of the highest class. That the snake god, whose strength could summon a storm, would be defeated by a human; it was a pinhole impossibility.

(It's not a problem of holding enormous strength.....but what does it mean if a Gift like the [Piece of Laplace] didn't work correctly.....)

The Gift wouldn't function correctly. A single possibility arose within Shiroyasha's mind regarding that.

(The Gift was cancelled.....? No, there's no way.)

She smiled wryly at the possibility that had floated up and discarded it.

Something like a Gift which could Cancel wasn't unusual in comparison with Little Garden which had gathered together fighting gods. But that was only when talking about one that was specialized to a single ability.

A person with a powerful miracle dwelling within their body like Sakamaki Izayoi having a divine art which could negate miracles was a huge contradiction. Faced with the degree of that contradiction, she had gone with the conclusion that there was a problem with the [Piece of Laplace].

The six of them moved to the front of the shop whose sign had been taken down for the day and bowed.

"Thank you for today. I'd be happy if you came to play again."

"Ara, that won't do, Kasukabe-san. The next time will be a equal-footed challenge."

"Yeah. Sucking back the spit one's spat out is unsightly, after all. Next time we'll have the challenge at the grand stage of our full might."

"Fufu, very well. I'll look forward to it.....by the way,"

Shiroyasha looked at them with a serious face.

"It's late, but there's one thing I'd like to ask. Do you fully understand the condition of your Community?"

"Ahh, about the name and banner? We've heard of it."

"Then you've also heard about how you must challenge a [Demon Lord] to regain them?"

"We're listening."

".....Then you all entered Kuro Usagi's Community while knowing that?"

Kuro Usagi was startled and averted her face. And thought at the same time. If she was dishonest and not spoke of the Community's present condition, she might have lost her irreplaceable friends.

"That's right. Defeating a Demon Lord sounds cool."

"It's not something that is decided by being [Cool].....seriously, this must be youth. This might be called reckless or brave. Well, you'll understand what a Demon Lord is like when you return to your Community. If you still wish to fight a Demon Lord after that, I won't stop you but.....you two girls. You will certainly die."

She declared it like a prediction. The two looked for the words to retort for a moment, but the advice of Shiroyasha, who carried the title of [Host Master] similar to Demon Lords, had an air of intimidation about them which prevented words.

"In front of a Demon Lord, your strength will be tested in a Gift Game. Speaking generally about the lower floors, you two won't survive through a Demon Lord's Game. Seeing a bug engulfed by the storm and toyed with unceremoniously is always a sad sight."

".....Thank you for the warning. We'll take it to heart. Next time, we'll come to challenge you to a serious Game, so be prepared."

"Fufu, as you wish. My base is at gate 3345. Come whenever to play.....but I'll have you wager Kuro Usagi."

"No!"

Kuro Usagi retorted immediately. Shiroyasha pursed her lips, pouting.

"Don't be so cold. If you join my Community, I'll guarantee you can live your entire life having fun, you know? I'll also prepare a private room with three meals a day and a collar."

"Three meals a day with a collar, isn't that a pet's treatment!"

Kuro Usagi was angry. Shiroyasha was laughing. The five were seen off by the unsociable shop clerk and departed from the [Thousand Eyes] gate 2105380 branch store.

## Part 3

After finishing Shiroyasha's Game, they walked for thirty minutes past the water fountain plaza and arrived before the gate to the [No Name]'s residential area. Something that looked like the vestiges of a hoisted banner could be seen.

"This is our Community. However, we still have to walk further from the entrance to reach the base, so please pardon that. There are still traces of the battle around here....."

"Traces of the battle? The one with that Demon Lord who's naming is so wonderful?"

"Y, yes."

"Just fine. Maybe I'll take a look at the leftover scars of Little Garden's worst disaster."

It seemed that Asuka was upset because of the incident not too long ago. For the girl who was very prideful, she couldn't swallow the reality of having herself looked down upon and compared to a bug.

Kuro Usagi opened the gate hesitantly. In so doing, a dry wind blew towards them.

The three shielded their faces from the sand clouds. One side of the ruins of a building came into sight.

"This is.....!?"

Asuka and Yō gasped upon seeing the scars engraved into the townscape and Izayoi narrowed his eyes.

Izayoi approached the wooden town and took a piece of the surrounding wreckage into his hand.

Gripping it a little, the wood gave out a dry sound and crumbled.

".....Oi, Kuro Usagi. The Gift Game with the Demon Lord --- **how many hundreds of years ago was it**?"

"It was a mere three years ago."

"Hah, that's interesting. No, it's seriously interesting. This **townscape was weathered down in three years**?"

Yes, their [No Name] Community was --- it was almost as if it had deteriorated and crumbled away over the course of hundreds of years.

The white avenue that should have been maintained was buried in sand and the wooden houses were decaying and falling apart. The iron bars and wires that were used at key points had been eaten away by rust and warped, and the roadside trees were neglected and withered to a pale white like stone monuments. The three gasped as they walked through the town whose condition made it unthinkable that people used to live here and it used to be bustling.

"I'm going to state it. No matter what destruction method was used, this kind of destruction is impossible. Other than naturally over a large period of time, the way this wood has deteriorated is unthinkable."

As Izayoi concluded the impossibility, he felt pleasant cold sweat.

Asuka and Yō also looked at the dilapidated house and expressed complex impressions.

"A tea set is still out on the veranda's table. It's like the people living here just disappeared instantly."

".....There's absolutely no presence of living creatures. To think that even beasts wouldn't come to a human residence that's not being maintained."

Their thoughts were voiced far heavier than Izayoi's.

Kuro Usagi averted her eyes from the dilapidated house and continued down the deteriorated avenue.

".....The Demon Lord's Game was that much of an otherworldly battle. Them not taking away this land was a display of their power as a Demon Lord and a warning. They playfully challenge humans that have strength and crush them such that they cannot oppose them a second time. The few comrades left had their hearts broken.....and left the Community and Little Garden."

This was the reason one prepared a large Game Board like Shiroyasha's when doing a large-scale Gift Game.

If a powerful Community and a Demon Lord fought, ugly scars would be left behind. The Demon Lords enjoyed that. Kuro Usagi continued through weathered down with eyes that showed she was sealing her emotions. Asuka and Yō also continued along with complex expressions.

But only Izayoi's eyes were fiery, and he smiled fearlessly while muttering.

"Demon Lord --- huh. That's good, good, really good, yeah. This seems more interesting than I imagined.....!"

# Chapter 4

## Part 1

Inside his manor Galdo was holding his head like he was in pain.

(I've done it this time.... I tried to get Kuro Usagi and it became something irreversible....!)

He was affiliated with a Demon Lord who possessed the Host Master privilege, but he was an ambitious person too.

His reason for joining a Demon Lord in the first place was so he can have its backing and by brandishing its name there is no Community that wouldn't be afraid.

Using that, he planned on ruling this area while slowly widening the reach of his influence, and in the end challenge the highest difficulty Game and obtain a Divinity-class Gift for himself.

To be able to do that he needed to raise the Community's fame and assemble more and more powerful people.

He really wanted Kuro Usagi as a decoration for the Community, as a pawn and as a plaything to satisfy his desires. He approached her many times in the past, but he was always ignored.

The continued existence of the [No Name] was on the line with this summoning and so it was the best chance for him to steal Kuro Usagi, but he went over his head.

"Shit ... shit, shit shit shit shit damn it all!!!"

Galdo picked up the desk that was nearby and threw it out through the window.

The desk was only for show anyway, it will become useless in a few days.

"That woman's Gift ... its the type that directly interferes with the mind. Against that no matter what kind of Game I prepare there won't be any chance for me!"

There was the problem. As the Host, he has to prepare a Game within his territory that is advantageous to him or he has no chance of winning.

Galdo was holding his head when a cold sounding woman's voice could be heard from outside the broken window.

"...Hoo. The subordinate of the Demon Lord that has his headquarters at the Number 666 Gate of Little Garden will lose to a bunch of [No Name]? I look forward to that one."

"Who's that!?"

Suddenly a wind and a dark shadow blew through the broken window. The one who appeared was a woman 2-3 years older than Izayoi and the girls, and she had gorgeous blond hair fluttering freely.

"Miserable. Is this a subordinate of the Demon Lord of a 3-digit Gate? So miserable I almost feel pity for you."

The blond woman shook her head in disappointment. Galdo raised his ferocious roaring voice and threatened her.

"You bitch .... don't know who the hell you are, but I'm really pissed now. Disappear before I bare my fangs at you."

"Fufu. I appreciate the spirit. But, an upstart of a beast such as yourself will bare your fangs at me, a pureblood of the Demon-kind?"

'Wha-?' Galdo's voice cut off in fright. His spirit from a moment ago withered in an instant. His face went pale and his huge body staggered a few steps backwards. Then he took another look at the blond woman.

Slightly waved blond hair and cold features, unfitting for her age.

Beautiful red eyes that take your breath away and feel like they would swallow anyone that looks at them.

From this atmosphere he understood that she is no ordinary woman, but he still couldn't believe it.

"P-Pureblood of the Demon-kind ..... !? No way, Demon-kind purebloods are mostly Divinity-class! Why would anyone like that come to me!? Are you a vanguard of the [No Name]!?"

The term 'Pureblood' refers to a Gift at the origin of the genealogical tree. They are different from an 'Upstart' like Galdo who was a mix of different races, and are called differently even in the same species.

The blond woman combed her hair up and reacted to Galdo's words.

"Ah, that. The truth is I have some business with those [No Name]. I thought they didn't wish to rebuild their Community anymore... but I heard a new recruit defeated a Divinity and so I came to take look at the situation."

Galdo fell to his knees like he was knocked down by someone, but not by the 'Demon-kind' woman in front of him.

The fact that he has to fight against some other monstrosity beside Kudou Asuka, who could defeat a Divinity-class opponent has left him in despair.

"Whe-When did that happen? Wasn't it Kuro Usagi?"

"Today, sometime before evening. I hear he is just a young boy. He is someone entirely different than the one you had the disagreement with for sure."

"Yo-You can't be serious!"

Galdo lost his self-restraint and groaned out loud, then opened the door of a hidden room and started to collect money and treasures.

The girl who called herself a 'Demon-kind' only watched in disappointment while playing with the tip of her blond hair.

"You've amassed quite an amount there it seems ... but you can't escape from a Game."

"Wh-Who cares! Do you know just how big ambitions I had when I came to Little Garden!? Year after year after year ... from the time I was just a beast I aimed for the top of Little Garden! And now that little bitch.... damnit....!"

His weeping voice was a mix of frustration and fear. What did he do wrong?

Just like the time he lived in the forest ... only relying on his claws and fangs, but this time he prospered with the help of his wit and schemes.

"Years of ambition, huh ... I've heard that a cat can become a spirit by just living long enough. Well a mongrel spirit anyway. This is the same for all beasts. Living long enough is all it takes to earn Divinity. At the end their body undergoes an explosive change and they become part of the Mythical Beast race, but .... it was unlucky for you to sell your soul to those demons. If only you would've kept preparing as a beast you wouldn't have gotten yourself mixed up with those thugs."

"Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!"

The blond woman took and held down the hand of the half-mad, shouting Galdo.

It was done in a gentle manner, but Galdo felt a more powerful grip than ever before.

"Wait a moment, tiger. I heard all about your present situation. Ah, you shouldn't ask where I heard it. I too have an indispensable associate."

She had a playful smile, but her eyes were strangely cold.

Galdo once again started shaking from terror towards this woman.

"In short, if you win, then all your problems will be solved, right?"

"N-No way in hell I can win! If you heard what happened during the day, then you know! I-I couldn't do anything against those brats!"

"Aye. The way you are now you probably can't win. But what if you were to obtain a new Gift ... the Gift of 'Demon-kind'? Then you would have some chance, right?"

Galdo's hands stopped. His face was stiff from fear, but he faced the woman for the first time.

" .... . Are you telling me to betray the [666 Beasts]?"

"That would happen as a result, yes. But you are probably aware of it as well. That High-Demon has no intention whatsoever to return to Little Garden. [666 Beasts] are just a disorderly mob that gathered around a Host Master. Even if you stay there, your future is obvious."

She whispered in Galdo's ear with a sweet alluring voice.

"I'm not telling you to betray them. I'm only interested in 'them'. When all this is over, you have gained your innocence and a new Gift. That is all there is to it. Pretty good deal, right?"

" ..... "

Galdo regained some of his composure and started thinking.

If the blond girl in front of him was indeed a Demon-kind Pureblood, then there was a high chance that she was leading a fairly powerful Community. And just as she said [666 Beast] were just a disorderly mob. Even in this situation where he would normally send a messenger requesting aid, nobody would answer his call.

In this situation it would not be such a bad idea to change Communities.

The other problem is that which 'Demon-kind' species is in question here.

"I have one question. Where is your Community?"

"I can't say that. If you don't agree, then there is no need to tell you anything. I will go back while the Moon is still out."

"Tsk. No choice then."

Galdo roughly untangled her hand from his and swept it away.

"Okay. But there is no time. How much time does it take to develop that 'Demon-kind' Gift?"

"Don't worry about that one. It will be over in no time, right here."

"What?"

He was caught by his collars. Before Galdo's mind caught up, the blond woman sank her teeth into the nape of his neck.

Gulp gulp. With a rough sound she tore Galdo's skin and started drinking his blood.

"Gya, gyaaaaaa!"

In an instant, the crimson red blood running through his veins swallowed his feral instincts. His pulse started beating irregularly like a muddy stream, every single one of his cells were on fire like log thrown in the fireplace and screamed in pain.

While his consciousness slowly sank into the cauldron of hell, he realized who he was dealing with.

(Pu-Pureblood Vampire .... the [Knight of Little Garden] !? This woman ... no way!)

"I will say it now, I didn't deceive you. I did indeed give you the Gift of Demon-kind."

She slowly licked her lips with her tongue. That smirk was a mischievous smile fitting for her age, but its beauty chilled everyone's heart who saw it.

"Well then, how will you react, renewed [No-Name]."

## Part 2

Residential Area of the [No-Names], near the floodgate.

The four of them and the calico cat passed through the ruins and slowly made their way to an area that had multiple empty buildings that looked more intact. With that, the four of them left the residential area behind and looked at placing the sapling of the Water Tree in the reservoir. It seemed the place had prior visitors, Jin and the Community's children were cleaning the channel with cleaning tools in their hands.

"Ah, everyone! The preparations of the channels and the reservoir are completed!"

"Well done, Jin-bocchan♪ Did everyone help with the cleaning as well?"

Wai-wai, the children merrily gathered around Kuro Usagi.

"Kurousa-neechan, welcome back!"

"I'm sleepy, but I helped with the cleaning~"

"Nee nee, who are those new people!?"

"Are they strong!? Are they cool!?"

"Yes! Very strong and charming people! I will introduce them right now so stand in a line everyone."

Pachin. Kuro Usagi snapped her fingers. With that the children formed a line with perfectly executed movements.

There were about 20 of them. Among them were some cat-eared and fox-eared boys and girls.

(*They are really nothing but kids. Around half of them are non-humans?*)

(*Lo-Looking at them now there are lot more than I imagined. And this is only one sixth of them?*)

( .... . *I ... can't really handle children. Will I be okay?*)

The three of them all had different impressions, but they didn't say them out loud. Even if they are bad with kids or anything, they will have to live with them from now on, therefore they will have to interact with them at least a little to not cause friction.

*Kohon*. Kuro Usagi coughed exaggeratedly and started introducing the three of them.

"They are - from the right - Sakamaki Izayoi-san, Kudou Asuka-san, Kasukabe Yō-san. As you all know, those who uphold the Community are the powerful Gift Players. Those who can't participate in a Gift Game support those Players in their private life, encourage them, and from time to time strain themselves for them."

"Ara, there is no need for that. It is no problem if you are more direct with us."

"Absolutely not. That way there won't be any organization."

Kuro Usagi immediately refused Asuka's proposition with a very strict tone in her voice.

This was the most serious tone and expression she had all day.

"The Community's daily life is ensured by those Gift Players participating in Gift Games and by the blessings they earn through them. As long as you live in the world of Little Garden, this is a rule that you cannot avoid. If you spoil them while they are young it will have a bad influence on their future."

"..... I see."

Kuro Usagi swiftly shushed Asuka with an authoritative voice and manner. It was a strictness of someone who lead this Community for the last three years. Another thought surfaced in Asuka's mind in the meantime.

Maybe there was much more resting on her shoulders now than she previously thought.

"The ones here are the eldest of the children. They can't participate in Gift Games, but as you can see some of them have Beast-type Gifts, so when you need something done, please use them. You are all right with that, right everyone?"

"""""""Let's get along from now on!"""""""

The 20 or so children shouted with an ear ringingly loud voice.

The three of them had a feeling like they were attacked by some kind of sonic weapon.

"Haha, how lively."

"I-Indeed"

( ... *can I really get along with them?*)

Izayoi was the only one laughing. The other two had a complex expression on their face.

"Well then, now that we have all been introduced, let's plant that Water Tree! I will put it on the pedestal so Izayoi-san please take it out of your Gift Card."

"Aiyo."

There was no water in the channel for many years now, but the frame remained intact. However it had cracks in some places and sand has accumulated in some important areas too. As expected, cleaning out all the gravel proved to be a difficult task.

Kasukabe Yō was standing on a stone wall looking around the area curiously.

"This is a big reservoir. Almost as big as a lake."

"*Indeed. After passing the gate we've seen many channels here and there, if all of those would contain water it would be a spectacle for sure. However the time these were last used was quite a long time ago isn't it? How was it, Rabbit-eared neechan?*"'

Kuro Usagi quickly turned around with the cat in her hands.

"Yes, the last time they were used was 3 years ago, Calico cat-san. Originally a Water Tree with a Dragon's Pupil was placed on the pedestal of the reservoir, but that too was taken by the Demon Lord."

Izayoi's eyes sparkled.

"Dragon's Pupil? What's that, I want that! Where can I get it?"

"Oh, I wonder where. I wouldn't tell Izayoi-san even if I knew."

If she'd told Izayoi about it, he would go and challenge its Game without a doubt. If he challenges a dragon then there really wouldn't be any way to save him. Kuro Usagi dodged the question and Jin returned to the previous topic.

"We did some maintenance work on it from time to time, but only the minimal amount. Besides, it's not possible to fill the whole reservoir and channels with this Water Tree alone yet. So we close off the channels towards the residential area and open only the one that flows in the direction of the main mansion and the dorm. We used that sometimes when we went to draw water from the river so no problems with that."

"Oh, is there a way to transport water from the river numerous kilometers away?"

Instead of Kuro Usagi who was busy with the placement of the sapling, Jin and the children answered Asuka's question.

"Yes. Everyone carried it with buckets in both hands."

"Half of it usually spills and disappears though."

"Although if Kuro Usa-neechan would be allowed to bring water from outside of Little Garden then she would fill the reservoir in no time."

" .... I see. Sounds tough."

Asuka was somewhat disappointed.

She was probably expecting a more epic or fantastic way. But if that method were to exist Kuro Usagi's head wouldn't have ached about the shortness of water and they wouldn't have welcomed the Water Tree with such joy.

Kuro Usagi made a big jump to the center of the reservoir where the pedestal was on top of a pillar, then said:

"Now then I will untie the string of the sapling and it will take root. Izayoi-san please open the channel for the mansion!"

"Aiyo."

Izayoi jumped down to the reservoir and opened the floodgate. Immediately after Kuro Usagi untied the string from the sapling, a big wave of water rushed forth from the fabric that was covering the roots and quickly started flooding the reservoir.

Izayoi who just opened the floodgate yelled in surprise.

"Wai-, hold on a minute you! I really don't want to get drenched anymore today, oi!"

Izayoi got soaked multiple times already today, so he jumped up on the stone wall in haste.

Now that the seal was undone, the roots of the Water Tree wrapped around the pillar below the pedestal in no time and started emitting even more water.

From the moonlight and the water running down from the branches of the tree, the freshly sprouted leaves emanated a dazzling radiance.

"Uwaa! This one is more lively than I imagined♪"

The strong current passed through the floodgate and quickly started filling the channel leading up to the mansion. The amount of water gushing forth from the Water Tree became much more than they originally anticipated, so much it filled the whole reservoir. Seeing the familiar scene of the water-reserves filling up Jin whispered filled with emotion.

"Amazing! With this we may be able to use water for things other than the basic needs...!"

"What? Are you planning on starting a farm or something like that?"

"Close. For example by growing flower-type Gifts like Suisen Ranka that thrive on water surfaces, it can become an income source for the Community even without participating in Gift Games. Plus everyone would be able take part in it..."

"Hm... Then what is that Suisen Ranka, ochibi?"

*E?* Jin left his mouth half open in surprise. However not by the fact that he didn't know of the flower.

He was surprised by how he called him 'ochibi' without any precedent, a nickname that mixes together respectful and scornful language.

"Su-Suisen Ranka, also called Aquaflan, is a light colored flower that has water purifying properties. It's also used for herbal baths and commonly traded for its aesthetic value too. As I recall there were some at the Fountain Plaza."

"Aah, that egg-like flower bud thing? Maybe we should've taken one back with us if it's that valuable."

"Wh-What are you saying? Suisen Ranka can even be used as Chip in Southern and Northern District Gift Games, it's a crime if you take one!"

"Oi oi, don't sweat over small things while you are still a kid, ochibi."

*Kachin.* Jin finally snapped and tried to retort back at him.

However Izayoi stopped him with a movement of his hand and said with a serious expression and a dreadful voice.

"Sorry, but I won't call you Leader before I approved of you. I only took that Water Tree because I felt like it. I didn't do it for the 'Good of the Community' at all."

Jin was at a loss for words. He heard from Kuro Usagi that it was Izayoi who defeated the Serpent God and obtained the Water Tree. As much as he expected him to be a considerable asset, these words hit him even harder.

"As I told Kuro Usagi before, if this Community becomes boring after I fulfilled my duty as a thanks for summoning me... I will leave without hesitation. Understood?"

Izayoi spoke in a manner that could be taken as sincere as well as threatening. Jin was mislead by Izayoi's frivolous attitude, but among the three, he is no doubt the biggest problem child of them all.

What 'boring' really meant was unknown, but exactly because of that Jin nodded back resolutely.

"We are a Community with the aspiration of 'Defeating the Demon Lord'. I'm not planning on relying on Kuro Usagi forever. During the next Gift Game.... I will prove that."

"Is that so. I look forward to it, *ochibi-sama*."

He turned around laughing playfully. For Jin that nickname was very irritating, but for now he couldn't do anything about it so he held back his words.

Contrary to Jin who only relied on Kuro Usagi so far, the new comrade Izayoi was able to contribute much more to the Community.

(*The first Gift Game.... I have to do my best.*)

Muttered Jin to himself while watching the sixteen-days-old moon rise to the surface of the reservoir.

## Part 3

When they arrived at the mansion it was already late-night. The silhouette of the headquarters under the moonlight was as big as a hotel's. Yō was looking at the mansion that will become their base and murmured in awe.

"It looks big even from far away, but ... it’s even bigger from close up. Where should we stay?"

"According to our Community's customs, we rank those who can participate in Gift Games and starting from the highest ranks they live on the highest floors, but .... you can use whichever you prefer now. Moving up and down would also be inconvenient."

"I see. Is there a problem if I use that other building?"

Asuka pointed at a building standing to the side of the mansion.

"Aah, that one is the children's building. It was used for something different originally, but for the sake of security everyone lives here now. If Asuka-san doesn't mind sharing the building with 120 children, then ..."

"I will refrain."

Asuka answered quickly. Even if she was not particularly bad at dealing with children, spending time with 120 of them probably didn't sound too good to her.

The three of them have set aside their questions about Little Garden and the Community for the time being, and expressed their strong desire to "Just want to take a bath for today.", so Kuro Usagi was in the process of preparing it for them.

When Kuro Usagi saw the current state of the large bath that wasn't used for quite a while now, she turned pale and

"Please wait about 1 hour! I will clean it in no time!" , she shouted and began cleaning at once.

The three of them briefly looked around each of their assigned rooms, then gathered in the waiting room of the bath.

"*Ojou .... do I really have to take a bath too?*"

"You do. Calico cat, you must properly take a bath too."

" ... phuun? I heard about it already, but you really can understand what the cat says."

"Yeah."

"*What's with that disrespectful tone! If you keep that up I will cover your bed in fur-balls!*"

"Don't say that. It's not nice."

To other people the cat's words only sounded as *nyaa nyaa*, but Yō responded to them naturally. To an outsider this looked rather creepy. Asuka reluctantly asked her.

"It may be a bit too meddlesome of a question, but ... perhaps the reason you did not have any friends was..."

"I had many friends. Just none of them were human."

From the tone of her answer Asuka knew not pry into the matter any further and stayed silent instead.

Kuro Usagi's voice sounded from the corridor soon after.

"Th-The preparations for the bath are done! Please enter starting with the ladies!"

"Thank you. We will go on ahead, Izayoi-kun."

"I'm a man who likes to enter later, so it's not a problem for me."

The three ladies headed directly to the large bath. The now alone Izayoi relaxed a bit in the waiting room, then...

"Now then. Let's settle things in the meantime with those guys outside."

## Part 4

The three ladies washed their bodies in the large bath and were finally able to relax and loosen up in the water.

It seems the ceiling of the bath-house was the same as Little Garden's, the night sky full of stars could be seen through the transparent ceiling.

Kuro Usagi was facing upwards stretching her body with her arms in the air, reflecting on the past day's events.

"This was certainly a long day. I have never expected that summoning new allies would be so troublesome."

"Would that be a complaint towards us?"

"Th-That wasn't my intention at all!"

Kuro Usagi was denying it vehemently, creating waves in the bath-water. Next to her Yō was soaking in the water with an absent minded expression on her face. With that same expression she murmured.

"This bath-water ... it smells like we're in the woods, really relaxing. Calico cat should just enter too."

"Indeed. We use the water that comes directly from the Water Tree, Calico cat-san would enjoy it for sure. It's clean water so no problem even if you were to drink some."

"Yeah. .... That reminds me, Kuro Usagi can also understand Calico cat?"

"Yes♪ With the Judge Master privilege Kuro Usagi can communicate with most species save for the most special ones."

Yō answered with an 'I see'. Her looking a bit happy was probably not a figment of ones' imagination.

Asuka put her long and silky hair in order, and mumbled in a dreamy state of mind.

"Feels a bit like an onsen. I like it, this kind of bath."

She lifted her right arm up and stroked it with the left. Just by doing that it looked like her skin became more beautiful.

"A tree that produces water ... is that also something called a Gift?"

"Yes. Gifts can be transformed into many different shapes, and by embedding it within a life form they can exhibit their power. This Water Tree Gift was born by the combination of a Sacred Tree with high spiritual power and the Blessing of the Water God. It would've probably manifested as a Gift with the power to control water if it was embedded in a living being."

"To control water? Not creating it?"

"It wouldn't be impossible, but it would be difficult creating purified water like the Sacred Tree does. Also the Water Tree does not create water out of nothing, the correct way to put it would be that it absorbs the moisture from the atmosphere through its leaves and increases its volume. Creating tangible matter out of nothing is something only someone on the level of Shiroyasha-sama or a Dragon would be able to."

Asuka answered with an absentminded 'I see'.

Watching the sky full of stars she muttered.

"Dragon, huh ... was that obtained through a Gift Game also? What is a dragon's Game like?"

"Tha-That I unfortunately don't know. When Kuro Usagi joined the Community it was already placed on top of the pedestal."

"Oh, that is a shame. I wanted to use it as a reference for tomorrow's Game."

Kuro Usagi laughed at Asuka's words, calling her anxiety unnecessary.

"No way! Preparing a Game that extravagant would be impossible for [Fores Garo]. The continued existence of their Community is riding on this Game, it will probably be about their preferred subject, which is 'Strength', it shouldn't pose any problems for you. No need to worry as long as it's not something that relies heavily on luck."

Asuka asked back immediately with an unpleasant expression.

"Are there Games that are based purely on luck?"

"Yes! Gift Games are a type of game after all. There are many Gift Games that only test one's luck. Games based on the roll of a dice are a good example."

"I-I see."

Asuka had a perplexed expression. A Community's continued existence depended on that Game, but Asuka didn't want it to be decided purely by luck. That kind of duel would be undignified.

"Gift Game ... huh. I thought everything is well as long as we enjoy ourselves, but ... . If we think about the Community we cannot be reckless. What do you think, Kasukabe-san?"

Asuka turned the topic over to Yō. She was quietly soaking in the bath-water so far, but she promptly answered the unforeseen question.

"I think it's all good if we win. If we win we will have fun and the Community will also be happy. Two birds with one stone."

"Yō-san is right! Enjoying the Games is a requirement for being a top-class Player."

"I am happy you say that."

Asuka was now regretting not asking for anything as a prize for their Game with [Fores Garo]. It was a winnable contest. She should've said something like 'Bet your full fortune on this!'.

Kuro Usagi inched closer to them changing the topic.

"By the way, by the way you two. We are having a 'naked communion' here, so if it's not a problem would you tell Kuro Usagi more about yourselves? About your hobbies, where you came from and the like."

"Oh, why are you interested in those?"

"That is of course out of curiosity! You are my long awaited fellow girls, Kuro Usagi is very interested in both of you♪"

Kuro Usagi asked with a joyous expression. Her words were without hidden meaning or ill intent, but the other two had a reluctant expression. In the letter they received it was written like this: 'Cast aside your family, your friends, your fortune, your whole world and come to Little Garden.'

They didn't want to reminiscence about those things they left behind.

"But, oh well. We are comrades living together from now on. I do not mind as long as you do not pry too much."

"I don't really want to talk about it. But, I do want to ask. I'm curious about Kuro Usagi. The way your hair color changes to the color of cherry blossom, it's kinda cool."

"Ayaya, is Kuro Usagi cool?"

"I was also wondering about that. Then how about we call this an exchange of information?"

The three girls were chatting for quite a bit after that, soaking in the hot bath-water.

## Part 5

The sixteen-days-old moon was out that night.

After leaving the mansion that Kuro Usagi led them to, Sakamaki Izayoi stood like a guardian Deva King in front of the building where the Community's children were sleeping, with his hands folded.

"Ooi.... If you don't decide soon, I won't be able to take a bath."

Zaa, the trees were swaying in the wind. At first glance there wasn't any sign of anyone being around, but Izayoi kept talking to himself with an annoyed expression like it was directed at someone.

"Are you going to attack this place, or not? If you're going to, then make up your mind already and do it."

Zazaa, still only the trees swaying in the wind. It still didn't look like anyone was hiding around there.

The disappointed Izayoi picked up a few stones and threw them lightly towards the shadows of the trees.

"Yo-!"

Zudogaan! An absurdly large sound of explosion, unthinkable from that light throw, blew away the nearby trees, threw the newly appeared shadowy figures high up in the air in all directions, and shook the windows of the nearby building.

Jin hurriedly came out of the building and asked Izayoi what is going on.

"Wha-what happened!?"

"Looks like intruders. Maybe from those [Fores Garo] lot?"

Shadowy figures and rubble were falling to the ground one after the other.

Those that were still conscious stood up with great difficulty and watched Izayoi and Jin intently.

"Wha-what absurd power....! The talk about him defeating the Serpent God was true after all."

"Yeah ..... with this they may be able to win the Game against Galdo.....!"

No animosity could be felt from the intruders' gaze. Izayoi may have noticed this, since he walked closer to the intruders and started talking to them.

"Ooh? What, you are not humans?"

Every one of the intruders had some body parts that were very different from humans.

Some had dog ears, some long body hair and claws, and some had eyes like a reptile.

Izayoi was looking at them with great interest, like he was browsing from them.

"We are people with a human base and different Beast-type Gifts. But since the level of our Gifts are low, we can only perform such an incomplete transformation."

"Hee..... so, you wanted to talk to us about something, that's why you didn't attack right? Hurry up and tell me."

Izayoi spoke to them with a smile. However the intruders all fell silent looking dejected.

After they exchanged looks between themselves, they lowered their heads with determination.

"We shamefully ask of you! Would you please completely destroy our..... no, the Community in league with the Demon Lord, [Fores Garo]!!"

"Don't want to."

He easily refused their desperate request. The intruders stiffened and were at a loss for words. Next to him Jin, who was only observing the situation until now, was dumbfounded and his jaw dropped slightly.

Izayoi's expression on the other hand became bored, and he turned his back on the intruders.

"You are probably one of those that had hostages taken from them, right? You were ordered to come here and kidnap a few kids, something along those lines right?"

"Y-yes. We didn't think you would be aware of even that, please forgive our ignorance and rude behaviour.... We all have someone taken as hostage, so we can't disobey Galdo."

"Aah, those hostages. They are already dead. There, this topic is done."

".....wha-?"

"Izayoi-san!!"

Jin quickly cut into the conversation. However Izayoi was speaking with the same cold tone to Jin too.

"Is there any reason to hide it? If you win tomorrow's Gift Game then it will all come out anyway, right?"

"Ev-even then, there are more appropriate ways to say it!!"

"Ha-, are you telling me to care about their feelings? You are joking right? Ochibi-sama. Think about it carefully. Who were the ones that kidnapped those killed hostages? None other than these guys."

Jin suddenly turned around. If they kidnapped even more people to save the hostages.... then it's not an understatement to say, that they are responsible for around half of the hostages' deaths.

"It's a cool thing to hunt down villains, but I won't do it if I'm asked by the same kind of scoundrel."

"The-then, the hostages are really....?"

"....Yes. It seems Galdo killed the hostages the same day they were abducted."

"No way....!"

The intruders all lowered their head. They all soiled their hands until today for the sake of those hostages, the shock from knowing that those hostages are no longer in this world must be immeasurable.

Seeing them sinking into despair, Izayoi had a sudden flash of insight.

(A lowlife scoundrel in league with a Demon Lord..... Maybe I can use this?)

He quickly turned around. He patted one of the intruders on the shoulder with a smile of a kid who just thought of a new mischief.

"You lot, do you hate [Fores Garo]? Do you want it to be destroyed?"

"O-of course! The things that we went through because of him....!"

"I see, I see. But you don't have the power to do just that, right?"

The men bit down on their lips.

"H-he is still a subordinate of a Demon Lord. His Gift is much higher class too. Even if we challenge him to a Game there is no way we can win! No, even if for some reason we win and we draw the Demon Lord's attention..."

"What if there was a Community for taking down that Demon Lord?"

Ha? All of them raised their heads. Izayoi grabbed Jin shoulders and pulled him closer.

"I'm saying this Jin-bocchan is building a Community to defeat the Demon Lords."

"Wha-!"

The intruders of course, but even Jin was shocked. That was very close to their Community's ambition, but at the same time not at all. Jin's plan was to protect the Community and defeat only the Demon Lord who took their Banner.

However Izayoi's explanation was almost like their Community was working towards defeating all of the Demon Lords.

Probably because such a Community was without precedence, the intruders asked them again with confused looks.

"A Community to defeat the Demon Lords? Wh-what is that...?"

"Exactly as I said. We will protect everyone from the menace of the Demon Lord's Community and their subordinates. And everyone we protect should advertise this: 'Amazing Deal. Attention. Those with Demon Lord problems. Please enquire further from Jin Russel' "

"It's a-"

'It's a joke right!?' is what Jin wanted to say, but his mouth was covered. Izayoi was completely serious.

Izayoi stood up quickly and spread his arms like he wanted to catch a strong wind,

"What happened to the hostages was regrettable. However, you can rest easy. Tomorrow our members with Jin Russel's leadership will take revenge for you! You don't even need to worry about what comes after that! And that is because our Jin Russel has risen up to defeat all the Demon Lords!"

"Oooo....!"

Izayoi was speaking in an exaggerated manner, but the intruders found hope in that. Jin was desperately trying to escape from his arms, but Izayoi's brute strength kept him pinned down, he couldn't even make a sound.

"Now, go back to your Communities! And tell all your fellow Communities too! That our Jin Russel will defeat the Demon Lords!"

"U-understood! Good luck for tomorrow Jin-bocchan!"

"Wa-.....Wai.....!"

Jin's shout didn't reach them, the intruders all retreated in the blink of an eye. After he was released from the oppressing arms he fell on his knees thoroughly confounded.

## Part 6

After getting out of the bath, the three girls wearing negligees as pajama substitutes went to Kuro Usagi's room for the purpose of finding different clothes to wear from the next day onwards. Especially Asuka, who came to Little Garden in formal wear and didn't have any everyday clothes. Yō always favored simple clothing, so there was no problem there, but it seemed Asuka wasn't satisfied.

"We came to a wonderful world like this after all. There should be no problem if I wear a suitable clothing as casual wear, right?"

"Of course! However I'm not sure if Kuro Usagi's wardrobe has any that would suit Asuka-san's taste."

Goso goso. Kuro Usagi was pillaging the wardrobe.

As Asuka's gaze was wandering around, the closet in the back caught her attention.

When Kuro Usagi noticed that her ears sprung up like she just had an excellent idea.

"That reminds me, the clothes I'm required to wear when I'm on referee duty are in that closet...!"

Kuro Usagi opened the closet. Many kind of costumes were on display in there.

"Which one does Asuka-san like more, one-piece or two-piece clothing?"

"If I had to choose, then I would say one-piece."

"I agree-♪ Kuro Usagi also prefers one-piece clothing. How about skirts?"

"I do not have any kind that I prefer the most.... but Kuro Usagi's skirt's length would be a bit embarrassing."

"Uu, I agree. Kuro Usagi also likes long skirts more...."

Goso goso. How many of those costumes are there? Kuro Usagi took a bunch of them out and started browsing from them.

Kuro Usagi was raiding the closet once again when she suddenly raised her voice.

"How about this one!?"

Basaa, she spread out a scarlet colored attire. A one-piece, long skirt clothing, or rather, it was an actual formal dress. Yō blinked three times from the flashiness of the dress.

"..... . That one as a casual wear?"

"Why, is it not wonderful? I like this kind of attire too."

The unusually enthusiastic Asuka took off her negligee and changed there and then.

Kuro Usagi explained more about the dress while lending a hand to Asuka.

"I received this dress from Shiroyasha-sama as a referee outfit. Since if there is a request for it, Rabbits also undertake jobs as a master of ceremonies along with our referee duties, and with that we are also responsible for the entertainment."

"Is that so?"

"Yes! So that's why there is a Divine Protection placed upon it that protects the wearer. Maybe it would also be a good idea to wear this for tomorrow's Gift Game."

Asuka just understood what Kuro Usagi's aim was.

Since it had a Gift of Protection embedded in it, it wasn't just a flashy decorative clothing, she thought it would be useful as a casual wear and would also come in handy in case of an emergency.

Wearing the dress Asuka took a few steps forward.

The beautiful dress that extended till Asuka's feet matched her every movement as she danced around a bit. Also by wearing it, her body strangely felt lighter than usual.

Asuka raised a voice of admiration.

"...It is amazing. I have never wore a skirt so easy to move in as this one."

"Fufu, but of course! This dress is none other than-"

"....but, the chest area is a bit too spacious."

Heh? Kuro Usagi who was suddenly at a loss for words inspected Asuka's body-line from the breasts down.

Asuka was well developed for a 15 years old girl, but compared to Kuro Usagi, she was still behind.

At first sight Kuro Usagi looked like a young girl, but her voluptuous breasts and the womanly figure from her navel to her buttocks formed an ideal body-line.

The waist area was fitting barely, but the breast part was no doubt too large.

Kuro Usagi tried to remedy the situation in haste.

"Ayaya, tha-that is....! We-well! I will change it tonight to match Asuka-san's size! It will most like be ready for tomorrow's Game....!"

"....yes, thank you."

Agreed Asuka with a complex expression. She felt a certain unspoken feeling of defeat. Even if she was a problem child, she was undoubtedly a maiden too.

The noise of someone running through the corridors of the headquarters sounded soon after that.

## Part 7

On the highest floor of the headquarters, Jin dragged Izayoi to the reception hall and shouted at him because he couldn't control his anger any longer.

"What are you trying to accomplish!?"

" 'Defeat the Demon Lord' only changed to 'Defeat all the Demon Lords and their accomplices', right? 'All those who have problems concerning Demon Lords please contact Jin Russel', the catch phrase could be something like this maybe?"

"It's not funny and this is not a laughing matter either! You saw what a Demon Lord's power is capable of at the Community's entrance, right!?"

"Of course. Being able to fight someone that has such an interesting power in a game would be awesome."

Izayoi sat down on the couch of the reception hall, leaned backwards arrogantly and expressed his hope for a match with a Demon Lord. Jin became speechless for a second, then asked him to explain his behavior.

"Awe.....awesome you say? Then Izayoi-san is planning on driving this Community to its destruction only for your own amusement?"

Jin's tone was stern. Izayoi's behavior was inexcusable.

If this man planned to use this Community only for his own amusement, then it doesn't matter how helpful of an asset he could have been, they couldn't welcome him. Jin would've had to talk it over with Kuro Usagi and drive him out. Izayoi was smiling jovially as always.

"Nope. This plan is indispensable for the development of the Community."

"Plan...? What do you mean?"

"I want to check something first. How did you plan on fighting the Demon Lord after summoning us? Those like Shiroyasha and the one that made those ruins are called 'Demon Lords', right?"

Jin fell silent. Although they wished to regain their honor and defeat the Demon Lord, it's not like he as a leader had any clearly defined plans for it. Jin gathered his young intellect and answered.

"First... I was planning on securing a water source. Even if a Water God class water source was out of the question, there were other sources of water that - after careful planning with the help of the newcomers - were possible to obtain. But regarding that Izayoi-san delivered an outcome beyond our wildest dreams, so I'm honestly grateful."

"Yeah, be very grateful."

Ignoring the laughing Izayoi, Jin continued.

"By steadily completing Gift Games the Community would definitely grow strong. Even if the newcomers were to be powerless, with all of our efforts combined we could still grow our Community bigger. More so with a gathering of such talented people.... we should've been able to handle any kind of Gift Game."

"I see, full of hopes and expectations."

Izayoi didn't show any sign of being intimidated. Jin couldn't control himself any longer, radically changing his tone he yelled at him.

"And yet.... and yet, what Izayoi-san did is exposing the Community to danger solely for your own amusement!! If an absurd rumor like we are a 'Community to Defeat the Demon Lords' spreads, then it's all over, Games with Demon Lords will be impossible to avoid. Do you really understand what that means!?"

Jin punched the wall of the reception hall while yelling. Most likely he really couldn't put up with it anymore. Seeing Jin like that Izayoi stopped laughing and this time he looked at him with scornful eyes.

"Unbelievable guy. You were talking about things like rebuilding, regaining your pride with a vague plan like that? I'm disappointed in you ochibi."

"Wha-"

"Growing stronger by taking part in Gift Games? That goes without question. I'm asking how will we win against the Demon Lord?"

"A-As I said, by taking part in Gift Games we grow stronger-"

"Then the previous Community didn't take part in Gift Games and grew strong?"

"Tha-....that is..."

Jin couldn't say anything. Izayoi immediately shot him another question.

"Also, the previous Community got big only by Gift Games?"

".... . No."

A Community grows bigger thanks to powerful Gifts and powerful Gift Bearers. In other words talented people.

It's only natural that the people that lived by relying on their own talents would want to be a part of a well known Community. However .... this Community doesn't have its crucial Name or Banner.

"We don't have a Name or Banner. There is not a single thing to represent our Community with. This way the word of our Community's existence can't even spread by word of mouth. That is the reason you summoned us, right?"

"....."

"With things like this we pretty much can't sign anything when buying and selling goods either. It's not a surprise that [Thousand Eyes] didn't treat us [No-Names] as customers. After all a [No-Name] is only one of the many nameless ones. And because of that it would be dangerous to place your trust in. You'll have to surpass the previous Community while carrying a handicap like this."

"Surpass... the previous..!?"

Realizing this fact felt like a hammer to the face for Jin.

The previous Community that was widely regarded as very impressive in the City of Little Garden.

Jin had only meager talents still, and only became the Leader because of his height and by coincidence. However even though he spoke of defeating the Demon Lord sometimes, Izayoi's words represented the reality he tried to avert his eyes from.

Jin was unable to retort back, so the astounded Izayoi delivered the final blow.

"As far as I can see you really didn't think of anything at all."

"....."

From the shame and the scale of responsibility that was revealed by those words, Jin couldn't raise his head.

However Izayoi grabbed Jin's shoulders firmly and said with a devious smile.

"If there is no Name or Banner ..... then there is no choice, but to promote the Leader's name, right?"

Jin suddenly raised his head. At the same time he recognized what Izayoi's aim was. When he spoke to the intruders, Izayoi emphasized Jin's name and the fact that he is the leader multiple times. That means,

"You plan to call attention to me .... and promote the existence of our Community that way."

"Yeah. Not a bad plan, right?"

This time Jin saw the proudly laughing Izayoi in a different light from before.

He recounted Izayoi's words multiple times in his mind, and started to think seriously about that strategy.

"I-Indeed.... that is an effective tactic. If the Leader works as a public face for the Community and promotes its existence .... It could build confidence comparable to having a Name and Banner."

Shiroyasha for example. Although she is only one of the Officers of [Thousand Eyes], her name is known in every part of the world. At times, having a prominent Leader can have the same effect as having a Banner.

"But this alone is not enough. There isn't enough impact to have the rumors spread far enough. So, if there would be even one example where the young boy named Jin Russel, whose aim is to Defeat the Demon Lords has won.... Then that rumor would certainly spread like ripples."

"A-And spread to whom?"

"To those that have the same 'Defeat the Demon Lords' ambition in mind."

Demon Lords challenged powerful Communities to fights as amusement. It would not be an understatement to say that they existed in Little Garden solely to satisfy their own desires. The Communities that were destroyed as a result were as many as stars in the sky. There is a good chance that capable people that were regrettably defeated by a Demon Lord would have the ambition of defeating them.

Jin's heart was pounding faster from the very specific strategy he could not even dream of before.

That was because the things he said were very much possible.

"Spreading rumors about the existence of our Community by using my name..."

"Yes. The current situation is a good opportunity. The opponent is connected to a Demon Lord and it's a Game we can win. The victims are from various Communities. If we can spread ochibi's name well enough with this ..."

Although small ones, ripples would spread within the Communities near Outer Gate number 2105380.

If they can earn the gratitude of the Communities that suffer from the hands of the Demon Lord's underlings, then rumors would steadily spread under the surface.

"Well, just as ochibi-sama fears, there is a high chance of attracting other Demon Lords as well. However there are precedents of a Demon Lord having been defeated, right?"

Kuro Usagi explained it like this: 'If you defeat a Demon Lord, you can make it your subordinate.' That means there were people who managed to defeat one, and that it's an opportunity to gain a powerful pawn for the organization.

"The most important thing that this Community is lacking right now is talented people. I won't say something ludicrous like I want people on my level, but I want some that can hold a candle to me. But it's up to ochibi to agree or disagree. If you have other cool plans then by all means, I will cooperate."

Jin took another good look at the smiling Izayoi. There were no signs of the anger anymore.

The logic behind his strategy was sound. It would've been easy to just agree, but he must not forget the unstable elements of the plan either. After considering all that, Jin set a condition.

"I have only one condition. Would you participate alone in a Gift Game that will be hosted by [Thousand Eyes] not long from now?"

"Why? Do you want me to demonstrate my strength?"

"That is also one reason. But there is another purpose behind it. A very important item will be showcased during this Game, which we have to take back no matter what."

Name and Banner. Something this Community treasures as much as those.

"You can't mean ... your former comrade?"

"Yes. And not just any ordinary comrade. One who was formerly known as a Demon Lord."

Izayoi's eyes sparkled. His smile became ominous and he started giving off an aura of danger.

"Heh? A Former Demon Lord was your comrade? That holds a pretty big significance."

Jin replied with a nod.

"Yes. As you guessed, that means the previous Community had experience fighting and defeating a Demon Lord."

"And there exists someone - who we will call Super Demon Lord with an amazing naming style - who can destroy a Community that made other Demon Lords submit."

"N-no one calls it that! There are power differences between the Demon Lords and all are very different. Shiroyasha-sama also has the Host Master privilege, but no one calls her a Demon Lord anymore. The term 'Demon Lord' only refers to those that abuse their Host Master privilege."

The Host Master privilege itself was nothing more than one of the tools that exist to make Little Garden more interesting.

Jin explained that it was only after some started to abuse it, that the term Demon Lord came into existence.

"The Game's Host will be one of the Officers of [Thousand Eyes]. He probably made some sort of deal with the Demon Lord that destroyed us and obtained ownership over our comrade. Since they are a trader Community, it would've been the best if we could take care of it using money, but..."

"It's rough being poor, huh? Anyway, all I have to do is get back that Former Demon Lord comrade right?"

Jin replied with a nod. If he was capable of it, then Jin certainly wanted to ask him to do just that.

"Yes. If we can accomplish that, it will become possible to prepare for the battles against Demon Lords, and I will also support your plan. However please don't tell Kuro Usagi about this yet..."

"Okay."

Izayoi stood up from the couch. When he opened the reception hall's door to return to his room, he said something to Jin like it just came to mind.

"Don't lose tomorrow's Game."

"I understand. Thank you."

"If you lose I will leave this Community."

"I understand. ..... What?"

# Chapter 5

## Part 1

**Little Garden Outer Gate Number 2105380. Peribed Way, In front of the Fountain Plaza.**

Asuka, Yō, Jin, Kuro Usagi, Izayoi and the Calico cat were on their way to Fores Garo's Residential District when someone called out to them from the sidewalk cafe emblazoned with the Six Scars' crest which they had patronized just yesterday.

"Ah! The honored customers of yesterday! Are you perhaps on your way to battle right now!?"

"*Ah, the nee-chan with the nicely bent tail! Yep, Yep, Ojou and the others are currently making their way to launch their attack!*"

The cat-eared waitress padded closer to Asuka and the rest and greeted them with a bow.

"The Boss told me to cheer you on too! Our Community had enough of their atrocities too! After all, they did do whatever they pleased in all of the Free, Residential, and Stage Districts of this Outer Gate Number 2105830. Please teach them a lesson and make them unable to commit any more heinous crimes!"

The cat-eared girl with nicely bent tail cheered them on, waving her hands about vehemently.

Smiling bitterly, Asuka responded with a resolute nod.

"Nn, that is our intention."

"Ooh! That's quite a reassuring response!", answered the cat-girl with a huge smile.

But suddenly, she toned down her volume to whisper to them softly:

"Actually, I've something to tell you. I heard talk that those [Fores Garo] guys won't be using the Stage District within their territory for the Game and that they had chosen the Residential District instead."

"In the Residential District?"

The one who asked that was Kuro Usagi. Asuka tilted her head in confusion upon hearing the unfamiliar expression.

"Kuro Usagi. What exactly is a 'Stage District'?"

"It's a District exclusively for the holding of Gift Games."

Stage Districts are territories within the Community Grounds where Communities can hold their Gift Games. There are very few people that possess Game Boards in different dimensions like Shiroyasha. Even more so on the Lower Levels.

The Free Districts contained commercial and recreational facilities, and the Residential Districts were used for lodging, gardening and raising livestock. Each Outer Gate had an immense number of those Districts connected to them.

"And there is more! They chased out all their comrades and the Communities they rule from there!"

"...That is indeed a strange thing to do."

Asuka and the rest looked at each other and tilted their head in puzzlement.

"Right, right!? I don't know what kind of Game it will be, but at any rate, please be careful!"

Accepting that passionate cheer for them, they headed for the Residential District of [Fores Garo].

"Ooh, everyone! We can see it .... now."

For a moment Kuro Usagi doubted her eyes. The others had the same thought as well. The reason was that the Residential District before them was turned into a jungle-like environment. Reaching the ivy covered gate, Yō reached out to touch the plant, murmuring while looking at the densely interlocking canopies.

"..... . A jungle?"

"Well it's a Community where a tiger lives. Not that strange really."

"No, it's really strange. [Fores Garo]'s Residential District should've been a perfectly ordinary one.... And those trees... it couldn't be...."

Jin carefully reached for one of the trees. The tree branch was pulsating like a living being and it felt like the pulse of a vein under his touch.

"These really are .... demonified? No, it can't be..."

"Jin-kun. There's a Geass Roll pasted up here", called out Asuka.

On the gatepost there was a parchment with the written specifics of this time's Game.

**<<GIFT GAME NAME: "Hunting">>**

**List of Participant(s):**

***Kudou Asuka**

***Kasukabe Yō**

***Jin Russel**

## Clearing Condition(s):

***The suppression of Galdo Gasper, who is lurking within the base of the Host.**

## Clearing Method(s):

***The suppression is only possible with the use of a designated weapon specified by the Host side. Aside from the designated weapon, Galdo Gasper is protected by the Geass and cannot be injured.**

## Defeat Condition(s):

***In case of surrender, or when the players become unable to fulfill the Win Condition mentioned above.**

## Designated Weapon(s):

***Placed within the Game Territory**

**Oath:** ***Respecting the above rules, the No-Name will proudly participate in the Gift Game under their Banner.***

*"[Fores Garo]" Seal*

"Galdo himself is the Win Condition .... and with a designated weapon!?"

"Thi-this is bad!"

Jin and Kuro Usagi were almost screaming.

"Is this Game that dangerous?" Asuka asked them looking worried.

"No, the Game itself is simple. The problem is this rule. With this rule in place Asuka-san can't control him with her Gift and he can't be injured by Yō-san's Gift either...!"

Asuka asked Kuro Usagi with a grim look on her face:

" ... what does that mean?"

"He is being protected not by a Gift, but by the Geass instead. With this condition, not even a Divinity holder could do anything to him. By including his own life in the Win Condition, he overcame the powers the two of you have!"

"I'm sorry, it was an oversight on my part. We should have decided on the rules on the spot from the beginning, when we were creating the Geass Roll..."

Since the one deciding the rules was the Host side, agreeing to a blank Game is nothing less than suicidal. Jin, who didn't participate in any Gift Game so far, did not know just how foolish it was to participate in a blank Gift Game that did not have its terms confirmed.

"So the enemy evened out the chances by putting his life on the line? From the view of a spectator, this sure makes it more entertaining."

"You sound very carefree saying that ... these terms are quite severe. There is not even a mention of what the designated weapon is, fighting like this could prove to be harsh." Asuka murmured while inspecting the Geass Roll with a stern expression.

She must've felt responsible for the Game she initiated. When Kuro Usagi and Yō noticed that, they grasped Asuka's hand and tried to cheer her up.

"I-it's alright! It's clearly stated in the Geass Roll as 'Designated' weapon! In other words, there must be a hint somewhere at least. If for some reason there is no hint provided, then it counts as breaking the rules and Fores Garo's defeat will be set in stone for having flouted the rules. As long as this Kuro Usagi is here, there will not be a chance for the other party to engage in foul play!"

"It's alright. We've got Kuro Usagi's assurance and I will do my best, too."

"...yes, indeed. Also, this kind of a disadvantage should come in handy in crushing the pride of that scoundrel."

Kuro Usagi was enthusiastically cheering for them and Yō looked motivated. Asuka also felt energized by the supporting words of those two.

This was a fight where they had thrown down the challenge and the opponent had taken it on. It should not be given up as long as there's a chance of winning.

In the background Izayoi was talking to Jin concerning last night.

"If you don't win this Game, my strategy won't be viable. So if you lose I will leave the Community. No changes in the plan. You got that, Ochibi?"

".... I understand. We absolutely won't lose."

They can't stumble on something like this. The three contestants opened the gate and rushed in.

## Part 2

Opening the gate was probably the start signal for the Game as trees started to grow quickly to weave their branches around the gate to block their path of escape.

The trees were standing so densely together, that they even obstructed the sunlight from coming in. It was hard to imagine people living in this place.

A pile of broken rubble of what used to be a path of red bricks had already been torn up and scattered by roots of the huge trees that jutted out from the ground, rendering it impassable to humans. With this they won't be able to tell where the enemy will attack from.

Yō informed the nervous looking Jin and Asuka.

"Don't worry. There's nobody nearby. I can tell by scent."

"Oh, you have a dog friend too?"

"Yeah. Around 20 of them."

Kasukabe Yō's Gift allowed her to grow stronger whenever she became friends with a beast. This was the reason behind her outstanding physical abilities. Her five senses like hearing and sense of smell were most likely even more acute than Izayoi's.

"Do you know where he is exactly?"

"I don't know yet. But I can't smell him even though he is downwind. That means there is a high chance of him laying low in a building somewhere."

"In that case, we should start searching the outside first."

The three of them started walking through the forest. The strange trees seemed to have swallowed up the homes with their growth, almost all the residences were torn up by branches and roots. The Residential District that should have been still in use the day before was now completely in ruins.

Kuro Usagi said that it was impossible for Fores Garo to stage a large scale Game, however if he had the power to create a mysterious forest overnight, then they shouldn't underestimate him.

"For him this is a once in a lifetime contest. He probably had one or two hidden tricks saved up until now."

"Yes. In reality his combat history only consists of matches that were essentially won by default. It wouldn't be strange if he had some powerful Gifts that haven't been revealed yet. Yō-san, even if you manage to find Galdo, please don't let your guard down."

Separating from the other two who were walking, Yō jumped on top of the tallest tree and kept a lookout for Galdo.

"....nothing. I cannot see anything that resembles a hint, and we did not find anything that would likely be the weapon."

"It's possible that Galdo himself fills that role."

Nothing ventured, nothing gained. That is certainly true, but if they don't have the weapon, they will only be assaulted one-sidedly. If they aim for the least risky hit-and-run tactic, then they have to rely on Yō's abilities.

"Although I don't like it, let's change our course of actions. First, Yō-san please search for Galdo with your abilities."

"Already found him."

Jin and Asuka directed their gaze towards Yō on top of the tree.

She jumped down from the tree and pointed towards the ruins of the red brick path.

"He is inside the headquarters. Although I only saw his shadow, I'm sure."

Kasukabe Yō's pupils were different from normal and she was looking at the headquarters with the golden pupils of a bird of prey. With the eyesight of a bird, that distance would probably pose no problem for her at all.

"Come to think of it, you also have a hawk friend. Though now that you have been summoned to a different world so suddenly, are they not sad about it?"

"H-hearing you put it that way ... is a bit painful."

Yō seemed deflated.

Asuka patted Yō's shoulder with a bitter smile as the three of them started vigilantly towards the Headquarters. The trees that eroded the road and were now hindering their progress, having intertwined in a way that made it seem to be a work of someone's orders.

*(Demonifying this many.... could it really be her...?)*

Jin only knew of one such person who could do that.

However he immediately shook off that thought. There was no way she could be here.

"Look, even the building was swallowed up too."

They arrived at [Fores Garo]'s headquarters. The door emblazoned with a tiger's stripe emblem was torn off and the glass of the windows were shattered. The luxurious exterior was damaged by ivy invasion and torn down along with the wall coating.

"Galdo was on the second floor. It's safe to go in."

As expected, the interior was also in a horrible state. The order-made furniture that must have cost a fortune were knocked over and scattered around.

As one would expect, the three of them had begun to have their doubts about this scene.

"Was that Stage of a strange forest scenery ... really done by him, I wonder?"

".... I don't know. Although the Host side's participant is restricted to Galdo alone, he could have asked someone else to prepare the stage."

"Even if he did ask someone to set the stage for him, there's not a single trap anywhere?"

Yō addressed that problem.

"The forest is a tiger's territory. He prepared an advantageous stage for a surprise attack ... or not. If that was the reason, there is no meaning in hiding in their headquarters. Yeah, also there is no reason to destroy their headquarters in the first place."

Yes, that was the most suspicious. The reason for building such a luxurious headquarters must've been Galdo's desire to show off. It can be said to be the symbol of his ambitions. Would he turn it to such a pitiful state for no reason?

The three of them started walking again, now with an entirely different kind of feeling of tension.

They turned all the rubble upside down and investigated every nook and cranny, but they didn't find any trace of a hint or weapon-like object.

It could be a single needle, or possibly a lump of metal that's impossible to lift up. And that was the unfavourable condition that might occur due to having thrown a blank challenge for the Host to decide on the rules. But even if it's just a nagging feeling that something is out of place, which has no bearing whatsoever on the outcome of the match, it didn't hurt to be careful going forward.

"We will go up to the second floor, but Jin-kun, you wait here."

"Wh-why is that? I also have a Gift. I won't be a burd-"

"That is not the reason. There is no telling what will happen upstairs. So we split into two groups, Kasukabe-san and myself will look for hints on how to win, and I would like you to protect the path of escape."

Although her reply was logical, Jin was still discontent. However he also knew the importance of protecting the path of escape. So Jin reluctantly decided to wait on the lower floor.

Hindered by roots, Asuka and Yō were slowly and silently advancing up the stairs. After they reached the top of the stairs, they positioned themselves on both sides of the last door and waited for an opportunity. They were both holding their breath, and just as they began to barge in resolutely, they heard from inside,

"Gr....."

"........GRRRRROAAAAARRRRR!!!"

A tiger monster that could no longer speak stood in their way, with its back turned towards a silver cross sword.

## Part 3

The roar of the beast reached the ears of Kuro Usagi and Izayoi, who were waiting in front of the gate.

All the wild birds hidden in the forest took flight at once, flying in all directions in panic.

"Th-that ferocious roar ...?"

"Ah, that must be it. It's Kasukabe using a tiger's Gift."

"Oh, I see. -wait, there's no way for that to be true! That was very rude, no matter how you look at it!", Kuro Usagi got angry ruffling up her rabbit ears.

Izayoi wasn't serious when he said that, but he shrugged his shoulders and corrected himself.

"Then it must be Jin-bocchan."

"Enough of these stupid remarks!!!", she said while hitting Izayoi with her exclusive use paper fan.

It seems that they were fairly bored.

Izayoi took a branch from the strange tree that was growing around the gate and snapped it in two while smiling.

"Speaking of that roar from before and also this Stage, this Game has really become much more interesting than we anticipated. Can we go take a look?"

"There are Games that take money for the right to watch them, but unless it's agreed by both parties upon beforehand, it's forbidden."

"What? That's no fun. Wouldn't it be okay if we think of it as the [Judge Master] and her escort?"

"As I said, we can't do that. These wonderful rabbit ears can grasp the general situation even from here. As long as it's not in a separate dimension where I can't perceive the situation, getting closer is strictly prohibited."

Tsk..., Izayoi clicked his tongue and murmured while tearing a wriggling tree branch apart vertically.

"..... rabbit-san of noble birth, really useless."

"At least say it where I can't hear it! That sort of comment would really make Kuro Usagi seriously downhearted!"

Kuro Usagi was clobbering him lightly.

However in reality Kuro Usagi knew what the current situation was and her heart was beating rapidly, praying for the trio's well-being.

*(These demonified plants..... **she** is most likely involved in this. That means the Game must've been built on fair rules. Please be alright everyone!)*

## Part 4

The tiger was charging so fast their eyes could barely follow it. The first one to react was Yō, pushing Asuka away, protecting her.

She barely avoided Galdo's charge and shouted towards Asuka, who was pushed towards the stairs.

"Run!"

That was the only word that needed to be said. Galdo's appearance was nothing like his weretiger appearance from the other day, what waited for the three of them was a tiger monster with gleaming red eyes. As soon as Jin, who was guarding the stairs, saw Galdo's appearance he immediately understood the situation.

"Demonification, and of the Vampire kind! As I thought, it's her ..."

"Do not mumble, we are running away right now!"

Asuka grabbed Jin's collar and jumped down the stairs. Having chosen Asuka and Jin as his targets Galdo had also leapt from the stairs to bar their way.

"ROOOOAAAAARRRRRR!!!"

"Wait, please wait! Yō-san is still upstairs!"

"Don't think so much about that, just run already!"

Due to Asuka's order, Jin's consciousness seemed like a little boat swallowed up by a tidal wave.

The feeling of 'need to get away' spread through the deepest recesses of his mind and he felt that every fiber of his being had solely concentrated on 'how to escape from that mansion'. Jin took Asuka's hand and said:

"We will escape in one go."

"Eh?"

Then grabbing Asuka by the waist, Jin kicked down the wall and escaped outside. As a result Asuka was carried away against her will by Jin. Even though the path had an uncertain footing, Jin was running through it with an agility comparable to a wild animal.

"Wai-wait a minute"

Perhaps Galdo couldn't leave the mansion. For having seen them off with his watchful eyes he had then slunk back into the shadows of the building.

They left the densely overgrown trees already and Asuka was still being carried. That was no problem, but getting away from the headquarters farther than needed was not according to plan. Asuka hurriedly gave him a command:

"This is enough, enough already! Stop in this instant!"

"Understood. ..... huh?"

Jin stopped as he finally returned to his senses. Only to find himself in the middle of the forest when he last recalled himself standing in the Headquarters. If that was bewildering, the fact that he was carrying Asuka in this current situation did nothing to lessen the mystery.

"Wa-wa!"

"Kya-!"

Jin fell backwards as his strength seemed to have given out under him. It was clear that he had fallen due to the load that was Asuka.

In turn, Asuka seemed displeased and she placed her weight on him while pinching his cheeks.

"Excuse me, that was a bit rude, don't you think? That way of falling over was like I am too heavy."

"N-no not at all, not at all, not at all! My strength increased so much I almost can't believe it... I guess that's due to Asuka-san's Gift?"

Asuka started pondering and released Jin's cheeks. It certainly wasn't her intention, but it didn't look like he was just acting. Putting that aside for now, Asuka told Jin about what she saw on the second floor.

"That silver cross sword that Galdo protects ... silver and cross. The Vampirified Galdo. –There is no mistake. The designated weapon is that silver cross sword."

"Vampirified?"

"Yes. Originally Galdo was a Weretiger that had obtained his Spirit status from the Gifts of a Human, Tiger and Demon. However he was most likely changed from a Human to a Demon-kind by a vampire."

That was the reason Galdo has the appearance of a tiger. Because of that vampire, he could no longer change into human form. That was because his Gift that allowed him to change into human form had already been converted into Demon-kind.

"Could it be that the one who prepared this stage wasn't him either, but that vampire?"

"I-I'm not yet certain that it's a work of a vampire. Vampires are a rare species here in the East Side after all. However there is a very high chance, that there is a mastermind behind this. For it would be impossible for Galdo, who has lost his reason and or having little sanity left in him to have the mind needed to create such a stage."

"I see.... I do not know who it is, but that person sure did something quite cheeky."

Asuka turned away looking displeased. Just the fact that an outsider got involved in a Game that she initiated, must've been enough to aggravate her temper.

Just then, the thicket beside them started to rustle and shake.

"Who is it?"

".....me."

It was Yō with blood all over her who appeared from the thicket.

As soon as they saw the bleeding Yō' right hand, they almost screamed.

"Ka-Kasukabe-san! Are you alright!?"

"I'm not.... alright. It hurts very much. I really might start crying."

After saying that she crumbled on the ground as her legs gave out on her. She was holding the silver cross sword in that right hand of hers.

"Could it be that you took the sword all by yourself?"

"I wanted to defeat him. .... sorry."

It wasn't clear what she was apologizing for. For without further elaboration, Yō had already completely lost consciousness.

"Th-this is bad! Rather than the wound itself, the blood loss! At this rate...!"

Her life was in danger due to excessive bleeding. Even if they wanted to give first aid quickly, there were no tools at hand to stop the bleeding.

Asuka stood up looking mortified, then took the sword and informed Jin.

"I will now go and exterminate that tiger. Jin-kun, you wait here."

"A-Asuka-san!? No way, it's impossible alone! It's regrettable, but we should forfeit in this situation! Yō-san's life is also in danger at this rate! It's not worth risking a comrade's life over it!"

That means letting go of Izayoi, but it was the least of their problems right now. At this rate they could lose both Yō and Asuka. However Asuka replied to the distressed Jin in a somewhat composed voice.

"It is alright. No matter how strong the opponent is, I will not lose to a beast that lost its reason— And don't you find it vexing? Kasukabe-san thought we could not win and fought all by herself."

To defeat Galdo, who obtained the strength of the Demon-kind, she had thought the two of them as only being in the way. Yō yelled 'Run away!' as soon as she saw him. That was because right then and there the only one that could buy time for them was Yō.

However Asuka had thought that Yō would follow behind them immediately after. Her intention was to reorganize and set up an ambush a second time, but instead, Yō had retrieved the sword and decided to fight all alone.

According to Kasukabe Yō's judgment, Asuka was not needed if she couldn't use her Gift.

"The bleeding, can you stop it with this?"

"Eh?..... Ah, yes"

Asuka untied the two ribbon that were in her hair.

She confirmed once more how easy it is to move in that crimson dress before turning back to face Jin.

"I will end it in 10 minutes. Just hold on for a bit."

"....."

Perhaps it was in response to Asuka's voice, Yō waved a 'Take care!' with her left hand.

## Part 5

Galdo Gasper had crouched in a ball on the second level of the Headquarters.

His left leg that had been cut in the previous battle was bleeding profusely.

*(.....Was it cut by the silver sword?)*

Galdo had not heard of the rules. No, to be exact, he had already lost the ability to comprehend speech. There seemed to be a person who was sent from the Golden haired Vampire to clarify the rules with him but that person had already stopped breathing— having become the first meal of a Vampirified Galdo. Galdo felt that the person might still be somewhere below his heart in the belly somewhere, but the current him wasn't able to remember that sort of detail too clearly.

He who did not know of the rules had only guarded the Silver cross sword due to the instinctive primal fear of such an object.

Ever since the day that he sold his soul to the Devil, Galdo had never come into contact with any silver-crafted items. And the reason would be similar to that of the werewolves—the fear of the exorcising characteristic inherent in Silver.

*(During the time that I've lived as a tiger, there wasn't anything that I had to be afraid of. No, in fact, there wasn't anything in the forest that was worth fearing.....Then when was it that I've become such a coward who has accumulated a list of fears?)*

It was from the moment when he had obtained the appearance of Man and started his life in Little Garden that Galdo had started to fear many things around him. For in the world of Little Garden, the existences that were far stronger than him could be said to be as uncountable as the number of stars in the sky.

Having obtained some authority with much struggle, the number of things he feared had increased even more. Upon knowing that a mere [No Name] Community housed a [Highborn of Little Garden], he had almost lost control with his jealousy.

*(That authority and Community I had is already done for.....All that I have left is only this building.)*

It wasn't that he couldn't leave the building, but he was unwilling to do so.

The last remaining scrap of sanity that he clung to desperately was filled with thoughts of keeping his territory and he didn't care about the Game which he had given no room in his limited sanity. And in this office which he had decorated to make himself look grand was all that remained of Galdo's pride.

Hence Galdo would not show any mercy to those who invaded this building for this was his territory and his area of influence.

Even if he were to face that Golden-haired Vampire now, Galdo would also fearlessly stand up to the challenge. The Weretiger that had all restrictions on him—removed, was now returning to his former wild instincts that trusted no one other than himself.

But it was then that the Headquarter started to undergo a strange change.

*(.....?)*

The scent that stimulated his nose was one that Galdo had recognised and it reminded him of his past when he had caught such a scent in the forest a long time ago. Somehow, he just couldn't pinpoint the memory and the situation of which such a scent was attributed to. But that didn't stop him from feeling a growing sense of unease from within.

As long as there's no infiltrators, he would not leave the room on the second floor.

But the unease had finally grown to the point that it shook this determination and had gripped Galdo's heart within its claws.

Unable to take it anymore, he ran out of the room and what met his sight caused him to be stumped.

*(The building.....is burning.....?)*

Compared to anger, the primal instinct of fear washed across his heart as he took in the dreadful sight of the first storey. The fear of fire was the normal instinct of wild animals and to compound to that fear, fire was in fact something that had left a trauma in him. For when he was just a young tiger cub, he had once witnessed the forest being destroyed by the hungry flames.

And it is also fire that will burn out his last ties to the life that he had as a Human.

".....GRRRRROAAAAARRRRR!!!"

Galdo rushed out from the burning building in a frenzy. The last shred of reason had long been burnt away by the flames and what was left of his mind was controlled by an awakened wild beast persona. One that favoured the thought of running in the forest and partially with the inclination towards the devouring of humans that came from the Vampirification. And the nearest source of blood scent wasn't that far from him either.

Bounding along the path between the trees that seemed to have neatly parted out of his way to guide him along, Galdo reached his destination.

".....I have been waiting for you though I must say that you came much faster than I had expected."

The tiger slowed down its steps. Not out of wariness.

But due to the burning torch fashioned out of broken off furniture and the silver cross sword held in her hands.

"Ara? Only cringing back at this point in time? Everything that you've worked to build up in [Fores Garo] should have gone to waste already right? Then the least that you can do is to bring out that piece of courage in you as the pride worthy of the forest, am I right?"

Even though it was taunted, the tiger wasn't able to comprehend human speech.

Moreover if he had retained even a spark of his reasoning, he would have realised the strangeness in the forest. That the trees which were supposed to grow densely and intertwine their branches to block off pathways had now moved to the sides, seemingly guided to the left and right to form a nice straight path.

".....Could it be that you can't comprehend my words? Oh right, after all you've completely changed into a beast now."

Asuka was just standing ahead of Galdo on the path where the trees had bent to the sides. A Vampirified Galdo was supposed to have a pounce much faster than that of a cheetah and should have easily darted in to clamp his teeth on her exposed throat. But the burning torch in her hand prevented him from doing just that.

"There is also Kasukabe-san's condition to consider. I shouldn't be wasting any more time here, so...."

Asuka threw the torch to one side and that acted as the signal. Raising the silvery white cross sword she tilted the tip towards the middle of Galdo's brows to prepare her battle stance.

"This is a one-on-one duel, so bring it on."

"..ROAAAAAAAR!!!"

Galdo ran along the straight path in a charge. And if he had an sliver of intelligence, he would have noticed....

In a situation where the path was a narrow and straight one that limited the choice of action, his movement would be limited as well.

"Hmph.....!"

Facing Galdo who was charging straight for her, Asuka had also made her stance to welcome the battle. However with just Asuka's slender wrist and arm, it wasn't possible for her to chop the tiger down.

Just a moment after the start of the battle, the Silvery white cross sword started to give out a brilliant light.

Asuka's Gift—[Authority], originally a raw unpolished gem, was now going through a change with her willpower.

The large amount of raw talent and Asuka's determination combined to grant power to various plants and caused a phenomenon in her subconscious state..... This was something that Kuro Usagi had suggested to Asuka in the Community Headquarters just the previous night.

According to Kuro Usagi, Asuka's unpolished talent had already leaned towards the element of [Subordination] due to her manipulation of the Gift in that area.

"So that means that my power can also be used to bend the will of those that are not Humans or living creatures?"

"YES! If Asuka-san wishes to develop a power other than that which you already possess and have great control over, you will have to learn how to make [some kind of target] result in [some kind of miracle]. However if it is to change a speciality trait that has been developed over a long time, it would take a long time and probably

your whole life to train. Kuro Usagi would suggest for you to continue working on the talent that you have an advantage on currently—-"

However, Asuka rejected the idea of making her control over others grow stronger. That's because she truly wanted to be friends with Kasukabe Yō and Sakamaki Izayoi who didn't have to be controlled to be friends with her.

"—Then Kuro Usagi will teach you a way to rapidly grow in strength without needing to rely on the power to control others."

Unable to abandon her current talent and the fact that it would take too long to redevelop a new talent, Asuka willingly accepted the compatibility of the subordination talent which she had always hated.

And to start developing her Gift in the new direction of [A Gift that controls Gifts].

**"Right now! Hold him there!"**

Under Asuka's shouted command, the branches of the demonified trees reached towards Galdo.

The whole idea for the straight path created by Asuka was to force the hand of the opponent to block off any routes of escape. Even if he were to be protected by the Geass Roll, the narrow path would still cause his actions to be limited and this was the plan by Asuka who wanted to win using her wits for her strength wasn't enough to slay him.

Asuka charged up the silver cross sword to release its exorcising powers to the maximum as Galdo was held by the tree roots just inches before her sword tip.

"GROAAAAAAAR!!!"

The tiger looking monster gave an enraged roar as it tried to struggle out of its entanglement of tree roots.

But before it could free itself, Asuka took aim and pierced the Silver Cross sword - with it's exorcising powers amplified to the maximum by Asuka's Gift - between the eyes of the beast.

"ROArr.....!"

With a brilliant light given off from the cross sword accompanied with the continued dead screams, it marked the end of the Tiger beast's time in the living world.

Asuka who was sent flying in one of the last few death throes slammed her back hard onto a tree. And due to the impact of the collision, she had gone into a coughing fit before feeling her lungs recover enough to stand up.

With a bitter smile mixed with sarcastic expression, she told the corpse of Galdo:

"Not that it means anything to you now.....but you sure look better as a tiger."

Part 6

As though to announce the end of the Game, all trees disappeared at once.

Upon hearing the sound of the abandoned houses collapse due to the sudden disappearance of their tree supports, Izayoi and Kuro Usagi started to sprint forth into the [Fores Garo] Community Grounds.

"Oi?! Is there a need to be so hurried?"

"Yes it's more than a need! It's an emergency! If Kuro Usagi didn't hear it wrong, Yō's situation should be quite critical.....!"

"Kuro Usagi! Over here! Yō-san's in danger!"

The two who ran swifter than the wind had covered the distance rapidly from where they had waited during the Game to reach somewhere near Jin and the others within a blink of an eye. And Jin who had hidden in one of the abandoned houses had to shout out to them to halt their sprint.

Upon seeing Yō's situation, Kuro Usagi couldn't help but draw a sharp intake of breath.

"Yō-san needs to be immediately sent to the workroom of our Community for it's only at that place that we have the full medical facilities. As for you two, please meet up with Asuka-san before returning together." Kuro Usagi said while carrying Yō into her arms.

"Got...Got it"

Just as his answer left his lips, Kuro Usagi had twisted around to face the direction of their Community grounds to start off at full throttle. The ground that she had stepped upon as she ran sank down to form depressions that looked as if a small

meteor chunk had showered upon the ground in a straight path and the silhouette of Kuro Usagi rapidly faded into the dust clouds that were left in her wake.

And seemingly slower by a beat, the surroundings along the trajectory that she ran past seemed to sway to the sides as the strong gust of wind from the pressure of her charge pushed them aside.

Izayoi gave a fierce smile as he saw them off with a critical and analytical eye fixed on Kuro Usagi.

"Oi, ochibi-sama. Does Kuro Usagi have the Gifts needed to save Kasukabe?"

"No but there's Gifts installed in one of the Community's workroom that can be used for medical treatments. But due to its complexity, they are all gadgets that can only be operated by her."

In other words, it would mean that only Kuro Usagi's capable of saving Kasukabe.

Reaching this conclusion, Izayoi seemed to have a satisfied smile as he muttered to himself:

"As I'd thought. That fellow sure is the most interesting of all. Still a far way off from reaching my level, but clearly of a different caliber in the [No Name]."

Compared to the rest of the Community and the other two from his world, Izayoi's interest was mainly focused upon Kuro Usagi.

The whole reason for him to have the level of interest enough to stay in [No Name] with the attitude of [Lending a hand might not be a bad idea], was mainly due to the curiosity about Kuro Usagi's altruism and dedication to the Community.

The rabbits that were sung by bards as the [Highborns of Little Garden]. They were fundamentally strong in will and with charming appearances. In Little Garden which amassed a horde of Demigods, Gods and Buddhas, they were born to the world as

one of the upper echelons and should have obtained the doting favour of millions. But why would such a Kuro Usagi sacrifice so much for the [No Name] that were almost as weak as a worm in the ground?

Izayoi really wanted to know the reason behind it.

*(If it was out of love or something along those lines, it would have been much easier to figure it out.....the problem is that the leader in question is like this.....)*

He gave a sidelong glance at Jin. And as their gazes met, Jin bowed his head seemingly guilty.

"Hm? What are you bowing to me for?"

"Because...Because it had all ended with me doing nothing to help."

"Oh, so that's the case? But it's a fact that you guys won right?"

Izayoi's tone wasn't sarcastic nor was it mocking, much less a praise and not even words of consolation.

Unable to pick up the meaning behind those words, Jin lifted his head to peer at Izayoi who continued to clarify his words:

"You guys have won. Then ochibi-sama must have played a major role right? At least Kasukabe's survival must have been due to your timely decisions and proper critical interventions right?"

"Ye...Yes."

"Isn't that good enough? What I'd like to ask instead would be about the Game. It's ochibi-sama's first time participating in a Gift Game right? Was it fun?"

"...No."

Jin shook his head with a troubled expression. Even if they had obtained victory, the many dangers and emergencies that kept popping up one after another were a far cry from the glorified victory that he had envisioned. Partially also due to his young age, but even if that were to be put aside, Jin still felt very disappointed at his powerless and hapless self during the Game.

"The strategy that you proposed last night.....the one with promoting my name, is it really going to work?"

"I would say that there's no other way. If ochibi-sama isn't willing, would you want to give up now?"

Izayoi said the honorific term in a mocking manner.

Jin was silent for a moment before shaking his head to reply.

"No, it's something I must do after all. If it is my name that is being promoted, perhaps in case of an emergency, it might still be able to alleviate the harm that might be brought to others. For perhaps even I can serve as a shield for everyone to some degree."

".....Is that so?"

Izayoi was mildly surprised. In other words Jin had chosen to do this due to the lack of other methods to rebuild the Community. He had also willingly took on the role to propagate his name as the Community that aimed to defeat Demon Lords. And Jin had just brazenly expressed that he would be content with allowing all the threats that may come in the future to target himself.

This is really such an interesting place that I've come to.....Izayoi struggled to suppress the desire to give a loud hearty laugh.

## Part 7

It wasn't long after the end of the Game that [Fores Garo] was issued the command to disband.

The people who had left the residential area to avoid the Game had gathered in a crowd before the doorway after noticing the disappearance of the demonified forest.

"Is that true.... Galdo has been defeated by .....?"

"Yes. Regarding the case of the hostages, we have already contacted the [Floor Master]. So there shouldn't be the problem of [666 Beasts] coming after those who were of [Fores Garo] members, out of stubborn pride."

The muttering and whispering crowd continued to grow around them, but whoops of joy were few and soft. There were even those that broke down on the spot after learning of the fate of the hostages from the mouths of the others. In addition to the fact that [Fores Garo] was the largest Community in the region, its sudden disappearance would also be a cause for uneasiness.

A guy representing the crowd stood up to clarify their cause of unease, albeit approaching the matter gingerly.

"There's something important that I would like to clarify."

"What is it? If something's the matter, feel free to speak up for I will see if I can help....."

"No..... Um... About us... do we have to join you guys— be controlled by the [No Name] Community?"

Jin's expression froze up at those words. For those weren't words of appreciation nor did it communicate joy of having been rescued.

But those words were to express the sense of loss that came from the thoughts of 'We will be forced to support this [No Name] Community that has literally no name to it?". Compared to the thankfulness to their benefactors, their worry of their futures had caused them to put the words in that sort of manner.

*(As I thought.....[No Name] still doesn't command the trust and confidence of others.....)*

Jin was momentarily stumped and was at a loss on what to reply to the question posed to him.

Just then, Izayoi came from behind to wrap his arm around Jin's shoulder while pulling him close to his body. Looking around at the crowd, he made a loud announcement:

"Starting from now, Jin Russel here will be returning your pride that [Fores Garo] had stolen from you! Please send your representatives forward to form a line!"

With that, Jin and Izayoi had instantly become the center of focus of the crowd that had already grown to almost a thousand strong. Izayoi nudged Jin on the back to give him a little push to the front before using a condescending attitude, that didn't fit his usual style, to address the crowd.

"Haven't you heard it the first time? We're planning to return your stolen prides to you guys— your [Name]s and [Flag]s! Representatives of each Community are to step forward now! Jin Russel who has defeated [Fores Garo] will be handing it over to you personally!"

"Is... Is that for real...."

"Our flags will be returned to us?"

Exchanging glances with their comrades, the crowd then decided to rush together in a stampede towards Jin.

Seeing that the young Jin was about to be stomped on by the wave of people, Izayoi stomped on the ground hard enough to make a web of fractures run through the ground around him and roared to stop them in their tracks:

"Form a line you idiots! This unruly mob is even worse than the beasts of [Fores Garo]!"

"Eeek....Eeek!"

Using the voice and authority that one wouldn't have imagined to be possessed by such a young teen, Izayoi made the crowd halt in their steps and obediently form a line.

And as Jin took the name list that was acquired from the [Floor Master] in advance, Izayoi then resumed his normal tone as he whispered to Jin:

"I've set the mood up for you. So be sure to promote yourself when returning the items to them, got it?"

"I...I got it."

That whisper was completely different from the tone and authority commanded by him just a moment ago. Asuka who just stood at the side as a spectator had also noticed their suspicious actions and was aware that they were up to something as she smiled and whispered to Izayoi:

"Looks like you guys are up to something interesting, am I right?"

"Hm? I don't know what you are talking about, Ojou-sama."

The both of them exchanged a mischievous smile that seemed like children who have succeeded at a devious prank. Although this was supposed to be a Game that

had no benefits to be reaped, the duo intended to use it to obtain something that shouldn't have been possible with just a simple victory.

"The Community [Rlyeh]—and this is your flag."

Upon receiving the flag, the male representative had tightly held it in his hands and he broke into tears while sinking into a kneeling position.

"The thought...The thought of holding the name of [Rlyeh]... my flag.... It had never crossed my mind that I would be able to hold and raise our flag again.....!"

"Please be sure to protect your flag and name and never let it out of your grasp again."

"Mhm.....! I will never let go of my...[Rlyeh]'s name and flag again! As long as our flag flies high, be it for years to come or generations, we will never forget this debt, Jin-bocchan!"

As the names and flag were returned to their original owners, there were some who started to dance in joy while others who reacted by brandishing it high in the air while running around and those who started to call the names of their deceased comrades while crumpling on the ground in a sobbing wreck.

Witnessing the sight before him, it made Izayoi realise the importance of a Community's Name and Flag in Little Garden and the sacredness associated with such objects.

*(The effect is much more dramatic than expected, but is the flag really that important in this world?)*

Having handed out the flag to the last Community on the list, Jin and Izayoi stood before the crowd.

"We've already returned the Name and Flag to all of you. But in return, we hope to ask something of you guys.

One, we hope that you will continue to remember that it's this Jin Russel who helped to get the Flags back for you guys.

Two, we hope that you will also remember that the Community that Jin Russel leads will be an organisation with the aim of 'Defeating Demon Lords'."

The commotion started up in the crowd upon hearing those words. The infiltrators who had heard of it the previous night were staring at Jin with a look of disbelief.

"Could it be... That you were serious about those words you said last time?"

"The opponents would be Demon Lords you know?! Just with these kids alone....."

"But I heard that their Community had defeated a Holder of Divinity....."

The arguments and thoughts of the crowd were thrown around and the word started to spread. But Izayoi just continued with his speech:

"As you are most likely aware, our Community is called [No Name]. For the sake of retrieving our Flag and Name that were stolen by a Demon Lord, we will be using our own strength to exchange blows with Demon Lords and their minions who will come to stand in our way in the future. But if you guys do not see and recognise us as an organisation, our Community will not be able to exist. So I would like you to keep in mind that we are the [No Name led by Jin Russel]. And we sincerely hope that you guys will give us the moral support until the day we take back our Name and Flag."

*(Wow, such a rare occasion for him to talk this much.)*

Asuka who stood in the corner was suppressing the urge to laugh. If the others were to know the usual Izayoi, they would surely feel that his speech looked too out of

the ordinary. Jin had also put on a complicated expression and was pulled back to reality by a pat on his back by Izayoi.

"I'm Jin Russel. From today onwards, the opportunities for you guys to hear of this name will surely grow, please take care of me in the meantime."

The crowd gave a cheer at that. The battle strategy having received its blessings had successfully taken a step forward, starting on a good note.

## Part 8

Upon returning to the Headquarters after wrapping things up on the other end, Izayoi, Asuka and Jin had made a beeline to the Community workroom to confirm Yō's situation. The workroom that Yō was warded in was a ritual ground that drew upon the power of Gifts for treatment.

Fortunately for them, the Demon Lord who had laid the [No Name] in shambles years ago did not bother to lay a hand on the treasury that hoarded the Gifts collected by the Community. And that left them with various Gifts stored within the workrooms. But due to their unique nature that required a lot of conditions to be met in order to be wielded, most of them were too troublesome to be operated and as such, made it difficult to find a buyer on the market who would take an interest to such high requirement equipment. Hence, they could leave them to lie and collect dust in the Treasury workrooms.

After paying a visit to Yō, Izayoi who was lying on the sofa in the lounge asked Kuro Usagi with disbelief in his voice:

"I heard that Kasukabe's injury will just require two or three days to be completely mended. Is this where they would say 'as expected of Little Garden where the Gods reside'?"

"Yes. It's just that she had lost quite a bit of blood so Kuro Usagi helped to perform a treatment to increase her red blood cell count. After all, if a blood transfusion were to be required, we would have to ask for another specialized Community to handle it."

"Well, I guess it's a good choice since that wouldn't require us to pay any fees right? Oh I almost forgot. What's the situation like for the Game you talked about the other time?"

Izayoi and Kuro Usagi were alone in the lounge on the third level of the Headquarters and they were discussing the Game where their comrade had been offered up as the Game reward.

Upon learning of Izayoi's willingness to participate in the Game, Kuro Usagi had happily gone to submit an application, but her expression upon her return was one that looked close to crying.

“The Game was delayed?!”

“Yes……Kuro Usagi had only learnt of it when she tried to apply for it. Looking at the way things are faring, it would seem that there’s a possibility that it will be delayed indefinitely.”

The rabbit ears on Kuro Usagi's head drooped while her face seemed to look disheartened and regretful as she pulled a long face.

Having propped himself up a little while earlier, Izayoi now fell back to the sofa seeming to regret having worked up his anticipation for nothing.

“To actually do such a silly thing as that. Can’t we just talk to Shiroyasha about it and ask her for some other way?”

“There shouldn't be any way by now, for it’s the talk of the town that there’s been a buyer who has taken interest and has made a generous offer.”

Izayoi scowled at that, clearly displeased by what he heard. But this unhappiness wasn’t caused by the sale of individuals.

Instead, the unhappiness was due to the notion of the Host redrawing the offer of the Game reward due to the appearance of a buyer with a generous offer.

Izayoi clicked his tongue in irritation:

“Tch! In the end it’s just an organization of traders?! From the perspective of what Hosts should actually do, that kind of act can only be called a despicable act! Isn’t [Thousand Eyes] a large group of Communities? How can they stoop that low?”

“There’s nothing we can do about it. After all [Thousand Eyes] IS A LARGE GROUP OF COMMUNITIES. With more than half of the Organization being directly under Shiroyasha-sama, but there’s still another portion that is under the control of the Communities under that Flag. And the Community that’s supposed to be in charge of hosting the Game is a cadre under the Flag, a Community by the name of [Perseus]. So long as the sum of the offer or Gift offered up to exchange for it is attractive enough, they wouldn’t bat an eye about putting a stain on the flag of the Twin Goddess, such as being bold enough to redraw the Gift Game.”

Although Kuro Usagi’s words may have sounded like a reluctant acceptance of fate, her regret and hate were definitely many times greater than what Izayoi felt.

Even so, the reason for her composure was due to the fact that Gift Games were the absolute law of Little Garden.

To retrieve one’s comrades who had been taken as trophies from the loss of a Gift Game was definitely a difficult task.

But Kuro Usagi was also clear that the only way to regain her former comrades would be through the winning of Gift Games. Hence, it could only be counted as an unfortunate event where luck wasn’t on their side and obediently give up on the thought.

“Forget it, let’s just wait for the next time then. Come to think about it, what kind of person is that comrade?”

“Well……To put it in one line, she’s a gorgeous woman with beautiful silky golden hair that feels just like flowing silk if you use your fingers to run through them while

combing. And when she takes a bath, the wet hair glistens like the light of the stars as it sparkles.”

“Oh? I don’t really get it, but it sounds like something that’s a worth a look.”

“Of course! Plus she’s very thoughtful about others, having taken a role as a Guardian for Kuro Usagi. If only she were nearby, Kuro Usagi would really want to talk to her a little……”

“Ara, those words really make me happy.”

The both of them were shocked as they immediately turned to look at the windows to see a golden haired teenage girl smiling while standing in mid-air outside the windows that were rattling quite noisily.

“Le…Leticia-sama!” Kuro Usagi who jumped up in surprise immediately rushed over to the windows.

“Don’t call me sama anymore, I’m now just a possession of another person. As a [Highborn of Little Garden], if you were to regard a [possession] with respect, you would be mocked, you know?”

Having opened the windows, the golden haired teenage girl who was named Leticia wore a bitter smile as she entered the lounge.

Her beautiful golden hair had a special custom-made ribbon fastened behind her head while a red leather jacket was pulled over the long dress. Although it was said that she’s an elder to Kuro Usagi, she appeared to look quite young.

“Excuse my rudeness for entering through the windows, but I just wanted to see you, Kuro Usagi without letting Jin know about my visit.”

“Is…Is that so? Ah! Kuro Usagi will get tea for you, please wait a moment!”

Perhaps it was the happiness from seeing a former comrade who had been lost for a long time, Kuro Usagi skipped lightly to the tea preparation room.

Noticing that Izayoi was also present and the fact that he was using a strange look to stare at her face, Leticia tilted her head as she returned the gaze.

“Is something the matter? Or is there something on my face?”

“No, I just felt that you really fit the description that I’ve heard of you. A gorgeous woman……No, a bishoujo. So I just thought that I would just admire you as a way to soothe my eyes.”

Izayoi’s reply sounded really serious and Leticia gave a hearty laugh in reply.

Suppressing the rest of the urge to laugh, she gave an aristocratic air of sitting on the chair.

“Hehe, I see. So you are Izayoi? Just like how Shiroyasha had described, a guy who is outspoken. But if you want to admire, Kuro Usagi shouldn’t lose to me right? After all, she does possess a lovely appearance that is of a different type of charm.”

“But because I count her as a pet, compared to admiring, I would say that it’s more meaningful to tease it right?”

“Hm, I won’t disagree.”

“Please disagree with that, can you?!”

Just then, Kuro Usagi who had returned with a tray of red tea pouted her lips in annoyance.

Her expression when pouring the tea into the teacups, which were given the once over scalding with hot water, was still that of a sulking face.

“When compared to you, Leticia-sama, most females in the world would not possess the worthiness to be admired. It isn’t only Kuro Usagi who looks inferior.”

“Nope, you didn’t completely lose you know? I do not deny that you are a bishoujo who has a different charm from her but if you were to ask about my personal preference, you are definitely my type, Kuro Usagi.”

“……Is…Is that so?”

Hearing that sudden confession that came so unexpectedly, Kuro Usagi's couldn't help but blush on her cheeks and rabbit ears. And though to date, the number of praises and confessions of love to her had been as many as the stars in the skies, the words of Izayoi just seemed to be imprinted on her mind and it hovered at her ears to an unnatural extent.

“……Kuro Usagi, could I have perhaps interrupted something? Like for example you guys had been having a nice little tryst before I …”

“No, there’s no such thing! Well then, what is it that brings you here today?”

Kuro Usagi panicked and hastily veered the topic back on course. Leticia was now the possession of another. For her to come here without the orders of her master, she should also be taking on quite a risk.

Then, she shouldn’t be here just to meet with them. For if she did intend to do so, Leticia would have also gone to visit Jin. Although Kuro Usagi was betting that Leticia was here to discuss a topic that shouldn't be heard by Jin, Leticia had surprised her with a shake of her head and a bitter smile at her lips.

“Well, it isn't something important. My reason for coming here was just to see the standard of the power in the new Community. As for not meeting Jin, it’s because I do not have the face to meet him after all if one were to look at the results conclusively, it was I who had injured your comrades.”

Kuro Usagi was suddenly reminded of the observation she had noted earlier. Although she had already suspected it from the start, it would seem that those demonified trees were truly the work of Leticia.

Even amongst the Demon species, the pure-blood Vampires were the rarest in terms of their race and numbers. Their ecology did not differ too widely from Izayoi's knowledge of Vampires. But if he had to point out the major difference, it would be how the different worlds viewed the Vampire Race.

Just like how the rabbit Heralds of the Little Garden's creator were termed as [Highborn of Little Garden],

The vampires who could only walk around in the broad daylight of Little Garden were called [Knights of Little Garden].

The Gift that they brought along could waive the ritual process completely. With just the exchange of blood, they were able to induce a Demonification. The recipient of the Gift would soon be consumed by the desire to devour Humans, but this technique was only limited to the [Pure Bloods] and it wouldn't cause the Demonification if one were to be preyed upon by other normal Vampires.

Hence when a Vampire got an impulse to suck blood, the Vampire would host an individual Gift Game with the Participants' blood as the bargaining chip. For in the cities of Little Garden, the respect and compliance with the Game rules was the only thing that allowed Vampires to live alongside the other Humans.

The cities of Little Garden enable the Vampires to enjoy and receive sunlight while leading a steady and glorious life. And in return, they have also defended and acted like Guardians for Little Garden, leading the pure blooded Vampires to be known as [Knights of Little Garden].

"A vampire huh? I see. Is that why it's set to be a beautiful person?"

“Eh?”

“Oh, don’t mind me. Please continue.” Izayoi waved his hand for them to continue.

“Actually when I had heard that Kuro Usagi and the others had announced to reconstruct the Community as [No Name], I had felt indignant about it……Fuming over why you guys had chosen such a stupid choice. For I knew that you guys had understood that this choice would be a very tough and obstacle filled path.”

“……”

“Just when I had obtained the chance to get in contact with you guys, to talk you guys out of it, albeit with much difficulty… I heard of a news that I just couldn't ignore…. It’s said that there’s a Possessor of Divinity who has joined your Community as your comrade.”

Kuro Usagi’s gaze shifted to Izayoi reflexively. Leticia should have heard about it from Shiroyasha.

The reason for Shiroyasha, the [Floor Master] who had a Community Headquarter in the four digit Outer Gate to specially come to the lowest Outer Gate of the seven digits would then be a small favor to smuggle Leticia over.

“So I wanted to use this time to conduct a small test to see if the new members possess the power enough to save the Community.”

“And your conclusion is?” Kuro Usagi asked with a serious look in her eyes but Leticia only gave a bitter smile as she shook her head.

“It’s unfortunate but Galdo wasn't even much of a tester with his meager power. Both girls who participated in the Game are just budding talents and it’s difficult to make a judgement now…… I did successfully make it here on the sly, but what

should I say to you guys?" Finding herself struggling with her thoughts that she did not seem to understand, Leticia could only smile wryly once more.

It was then that Izayoi took on a dismissive attitude to rectify Leticia's words.

"To pay a special visit to your old home to say something? It can't be that, right? Shouldn't it be more of a desire to find relief from the sight of one's old Community being able to progress and develop once more?"

"……Hm. That may be true."

Leticia concurred with Izayoi's point but if that were so, it would mean that everything was about to end without having accomplished her aim. In terms of Human strength, Asuka and Yō should already be Humans who possessed extraordinary talents. However those were similar to unrefined ores that didn't give Leticia the peace of mind to entrust the fate of her previous comrades to. But even if it's the case, she had already lost her chance to talk Kuro Usagi and the others to disband and create a new Community. Since the situation that occurred after the defeat of [Fores Garo] had already made this a futile attempt.

Although Leticia had risked herself to return to her old home, her aim was now stuck in a tight spot as she couldn't make any progress or retreat. Seeing how Leticia kept that wry smile in self-mockery on her face, Izayoi made a suggestion in a frivolous tone:

"Well if you are that insecure about it, there's only one way to get rid of it then."

"What?"

"Actually it's quite simple. Since you worry about whether [No Name] possesses or lacks the ability to go up against Demon Lords, you just have to use your own power to test it out—How's that? Former Demon Lord-sama?"

Izayoi stood up abruptly. Understanding Izayoi's intention, Leticia was momentarily stumped for words, but she soon broke out into laughter. Leticia who gave that exaggerated laugh also stood up, having laughed to the point where tears had formed at the edges of her eyes.

"Hehe……I see, that's something that I didn't think of. It's definitely a simple and effective way. If I had known, I would have done this straight from the start and not played some kind of inferior plotting behind the shadows."

"Please…Please wait a moment, both of you?"

"What do we do about the Game rules?"

"Since it's a test of strength anyway, let's not make it too complicated. We will just strike each other and see the reaction of our opponents."

"The last man standing wins? Is that so? Okay, that's what we call 'simple is the best' right?"

The both of them smiled at each other before jumping to the courtyard by exiting through the window at the same time.

The windows that were left open from earlier didn't pose an obstacle for the both of them as they successfully passed through the frame. And as they faced each other in the courtyard that measured around 10 jo, their positions were separated like Heaven and Earth.

"Oh? So Little Garden Vampires have wings?"

“Hm. Although it isn't flight with the use of wings……does it make you dissatisfied to see me having the skies at my disposal?”

“No, we didn’t rule that out in the rules.”

Izayoi shrugged his shoulders indifferently. Although this meant that Izayoi was in a less favorable position, Izayoi did not discuss it further but merely got himself into a defensive stance.

And Leticia started to evaluate him from this response.

In Gift Games, assuming that the opponent was an unknown factor is a basic rule.

Take for example if a monkey had brought up a complaint that the bird was being unfair for having the ability to fly freely in the skies, in a Gift game, it would be seen as the fault of the monkey for being unable to fly and the monkey’s complaint wouldn’t have been a valid argument. To see the opponent whose abilities remain a mystery take the first step in displaying a skill and come up with a counter with one’s own Gifts on hand, that was the true essence of Gift Games and the greatest joy.

(I see. He does have the right attitude towards the game, let’s see if he has the strength to back that up……!)

With her back facing the full moon, Leticia smiled as she unfurled her Black Wings while taking out her own Gift card.

Seeing the Gift card that was adorned with the contrasting colors of Black, Red and Gold being drawn out, Kuro Usagi had turned pale and shouted loudly:

“Leti…Leticia-sama! That Gift card is……”

“Stand down, Kuro Usagi, although this is a test of strength, it is equivalent to a duel.”

The Gift card gave off a bright light as it materialized the Gift's true form that was sealed within the card.

As the light particles condensed to form the outer shell of the item, it suddenly shattered outwards to reveal a weapon fashioned like a lance.

"We will just toss a lance at each other and if the opponent is unable to block it, it would be counted as an immediate loss. Excuse me but I will be starting first."

"Fine by me."

Leticia raised the lance, which was to be thrown, high into the air.

"Hu—-!"

Leticia took a deep breath to adjust her breathing while spreading her wings even more.

Rotating her whole body to add to the momentum of the toss, the impact of the throw caused the air to ripple and the lance pierced through the air with such force that ripples of air could be seen spreading to the sides of the lance's tip as it flew towards its intended target.

*Ha!*

The lance that was thrown with a fierce shout had already started to heat up due to the resistance of the air and was rapidly closing in on Izayoi in a straight line.

Facing the lance tip that was flying towards his face while vibrating the air around it like a meteor, Izayoi parted his lips in a smile.

"Hmph!—What's there to be cocky about?!" And swung his fist to smash into the lance.

“—Shwat……?”

Leticia and Kuro Usagi had both given out a shout that was seriously out of tune.

But it’s because the following description is not metaphorically speaking and there’s no other way to describe it fully. The tip of the lance that was sharpened to the point where it could be thrown at a speed that would allow it to pierce through all air resistance…its shape, from the sharp lance tip to the intricately designed handle with its beautifully crafted patterns, was twisted into a lump of iron in just one strike and had shattered to form countless shrapnel that seemed like pellets of a shotgun as they flew back towards Leticia.

(This …This is bad…..!)

Such a crazy destructive power! Leticia did not have the ability to defend against such a strike and that only left her the option of dodging.

But her body did not catch up to the speed of her thoughts. No, it wouldn’t have mattered even if it were able to catch up.

If it were a normal bullet, Leticia, who was a Pure Blood Vampire should have the ability to use her hand to swipe it away. But currently in the face of these wicked sharp shrapnel that were travelling at a speed similar to the Third Cosmic Velocity and rapidly approaching with a speed that was faster than humanely possible, it was impossible for her to do the same.

(To…To actually be that strong to this extent……!)

And as Leticia was about to be made into a dartboard, she gave a wry smile. Having witnessed Izayoi’s extraordinary strength, Leticia felt a little ashamed for having naively requested a visual assessment and at the same time, she felt relieved.

Since this guy holds such a strong talent, maybe……when Leticia had just mentally prepared herself to fall to the ground torn up to shreds and covered in blood—

“Leticia-sama!”

Simultaneously, Kuro Usagi who had leaped out of the window helped her to block the metal shrapnel that had nearly reached its target. In her surprise and shock, Leticia had also retracted her wings while hugging Kuro Usagi as they descended.

“Kuro…Kuro Usagi! What are you doing?!”

All of a sudden, Leticia shouted loudly. However, it wasn’t to protest Kuro Usagi’s intervention in the battle. But it was due to Kuro Usagi’s act of snatching the Gift card from her hand and holding onto it tightly.

Ignoring Leticia’s protests, she stared at the Gift card in her hand and following that, she turned back to face Leticia while saying in a trembling voice:

“Gift name [Pure Blood Kyūketsuki Hime]……as I thought! The Gift name has changed! Although retaining its demon species, it now lacks the Divinity!”

“Uu……!”

Leticia immediately looked away, being unable to meet Kuro Usagi’s gaze. Izayoi who had stridden over to them, seemed a little disappointed but he shrugged his shoulders with a disapproving expression on his face.

“What’s this? Could it be that you do not have the former Demon Lord-sama Gift anymore and have only been left with a Vampire Gift?”

“……Yes, Most of the weapons are still retained but the Gift that used to be held in her body……”

Izayoi did not bother to hide his frustration as he clicked his tongue harshly.

It's most probably due to him feeling displeased by the thought that Leticia in her current weak state had challenged him as his opponent.

"Hmph! No wonder there wasn't even a bit of fight put up from your end! So this means that after becoming the possession of another person, the Gifts will also be taken?"

"No……The Demon Lord only took away talented individuals from the Community and wasn't after the Gifts. Different from the Gifts that can materialize as weapons, what we call [Grace] is the miracle that has been given to various Gods, deities, Buddhas and Spirits. In other words, it is a part of the soul and is unable to be forcefully removed from the holder of the Gift without their consent."

It meant that Leticia had consented to give up her Gift. Seeing how the both of them were focusing on her with their gazes, Leticia seemed to turn away her eyes with a pained expression.

Kuro Usagi wore a grim expression on her face as she asked:

"Leticia-sama, your former power that was equivalent to that of a [Demon Lord] was due to the dual possession of both the pure blooded Demon type and Divinity, hence earning you the title of one. But with your current abilities, it seems like it's not even a tenth of your original strength. Why did it become like this……"

"……This is……"

Leticia started her words hesitantly before stopping and she continued that way for a few more times. But in the end, she was still unable to be honest with them and had relapsed into her silence while looking down at the ground.

Izayoi scratched his head in irritation as he gave a suggestion:

“Forget it, how should I say it…If you have something to say, let’s just head back to the room first.”

“……I guess you are right……”

The both of them nodded their heads gloomily.

## Part 9

—At the same time, Location: [Thousand Eyes], Outer Gate Number 2105380, a branch of the Community's shops.

After confirming that the shop front had been closed, Shiroyasha walled along the gallery towards the west side of the shop to arrive at a spot that was far deeper than the position of her room to visit a room that was located at a different courtyard. Although that was a room that was used to entertain VIP guests; currently, the person inside wasn't a guest.

The person inside was someone who was just like Shiroyasha, one of the cadres of [Thousand Eyes]. He was a lean guy who had flaxen hair while wearing a snakeskin jacket. This man who wore a snakeskin jacket must have requested for two women to serve him while waiting. For one could see that he had deliberately held out his cup to the woman in a courtesan style kimono to refill his cup with wine while smiling to say to Shiroyasha:

"To let me wait for so long. Dumping your Community's comrade aside to receive a customer, I bet it must have been some important guest right?"

Shiroyasha scratched her head of white hair as she replied in disdain:

"Hmph, what comrade are you talking about, what utter rubbish. How dare a mere upstart like you request for my girls to serve you, you have quite some spunk there, boy! Okay, that's it from you guys! Stop right now, it's enough! Return to your stations of accounting the transactions."

"Yes…Yes madam."

The girls started to straighten out their rumpled clothes as they hurried out of the room.

“What a pity. It’s because they told me that they would accept all kinds of request that I allowed myself to indulge a little. After all, [Perseus] doesn’t have that sort of docile girls with that kind of standard. Could you count on our connections as cadres to sell them to me?”

“……Regarding matters of insult, I will reply with a duel you know? Laius-san.”

Shiroyasha’s white hair began to quiver and her anger was obvious as it leaked into her tone in a threatening manner. For Shiroyasha who placed her comrades as her top priority, the request of ‘Trading comrades with the use of money’ could only be taken as an insult.

The guy called Laius only gave a shrug of his shoulders while replying insincerely:

“Pardon me. If I’ve ruffled your feathers the wrong way I will offer my apologies then.”

“Hmph. Then, what brings the young master who has inherited [Perseus] over today?”

“I think you should know the answer, right?”

The both of them stared at each other. Needless to say, the reason for Laius’s visit would be regarding Leticia.

Even if it wasn't about that matter, there had already been a rift between their relations from the start.

Although Shiroyasha and Laius are from the same Community, the difference between the main branch and the side branch could be said to be miles apart, just like Heaven and Earth.

The original [Perseus] wasn't a part of [Thousand Eyes], but was a Community that originated from a knight in the Greek mythologies.

Back in the long past, the Knight Perseus was assumed to have ascended to the Heavens as a constellation after having enjoyed his later years. But in reality, he had been invited over to this place, which was the world of Little Garden. The name of the Community [Perseus] was to represent the members who were the direct descendants of Perseus himself. In Little Garden, where it amassed many Gods and demigods from all over, people who were similar to them with such a special and specific legend behind them weren't in the minorities.

After many years past, due to the division or destruction of the original organization, they had also often taken action to seek protection from the other Communities.

Shiroyasha gave a harumph as she snapped open her favorite folding fan.

“If it’s about Leticia, I did not intend to hide it from you either. It was you guys who had made the first move to bring shame upon the Twin Goddess Flag. To actually withdraw a Gift Game that you had been announced to Host? If it were to be dealt with in the normal procedure, this would easily cause you to be demoted in level as a punishment.”

“Hm about that, I’m also aware of it. That’s why in the face of such insidious, despicable and petty, who knows where or what caused such a troublesome, behavior, I can only swallow my tears and quietly respond like this, you know?”

(I oppose any use of authority to harass me!) Laius raised his hands in mock surrender as he laughed, clearly in an insult.

Although Shiroyasha was angry to the point where her veins were throbbing at her temples, she wasn't foolish enough to rise to his mediocre taunt.

Laius gave a laugh as he continued:

“And I did withdraw the Game only after consulting and receiving the consent of the Participants who had registered with us earlier on. I reckon that I’ve done the minimum courtesy.”

“Oh? Is that so?”

Shiroyasha was also too lazy to ask what kind of method that Laius had used to achieve that end.

For she was sure that even if she clarified and obtained the answer, it would only spoil her mood even more.

“Anyways, the Leticia in question is no longer here. Hng Hng, you are almost two steps behind on the matter.”

“Of course I know of this trivial stuff. Anyways, I also have an inkling on where she ran to, I do have a perfect grasp on the past of all my possessions, you know?”

Facing the Laius who wasn’t the least bit in panic, Shiroyasha’s expression had distorted in surprise.

“……Then why did you come to this place? Shouldn’t you have gone immediately to bring her back with you? That would have been easier right?”

“I’ve already dispatched my men to go over there, so I don’t think it will take long to find it.”

Picking a piece of the refreshments to place into his mouth, Laius exuded an odd sense of calm. This strange behavior only served to give Shiroyasha an uneasy premonition.

As Shiroyasha got to her feet silently, Laius threw the plate that was originally used to hold the refreshments at the doors, clearly a sign to stop her from leaving.

*Crunch* Shiroyasha stomped on the plate fragments to grind them to dust as she asked with open hostility:

“Boy, what do you mean by that?”

“I’m just thinking that I should at least prevent such a thing from happening again, for I consider that to be the best arrangement. The success of that staged dramatic escape is due to the dedication to its former Community. If this dedication were to be severed, maybe it might just bring trouble to the trading partners right?”

Shiroyasha realized that the anxiety in her chest wasn’t unfounded.

“You bastard……Could it be that you’ve sent your men to attack the [No Name]?!”

“What attack are you talking about? That sure is a rude way of putting it. I’m just going to mete out punishment to the [No Name] who have stolen our possession!”

“Hm, that sounds good, I think I will use that. After all even if a nameless Community were to be destroyed, nobody will miss them right?”

Laius gave a shrug as he didn’t take Shiroyasha’s angry roar seriously. Though Shiroyasha really wanted to strangle that twerp, but it wasn’t the time for that sort of thing. She reached out to the doors with the intention to leave but found that the door wouldn’t budge.

“Ah, I forgot to say this but the doorway has been tampered with by me already.”

“You insolent kid……! I think you really want to die, right?”

“Ara? You want to kill a comrade? Killing a comrade is quite a serious offense you know?”

“Hmph! If I kill a low-life bastard, there won’t be anyone who will miss him! You fool!”

“Woah Aiyo! Indeed, if it’s you who’s known as the [Demon Lord of White Night], Shiroyasha-sama makes a move, I guess even I will die right?……But before getting killed, I will at least try to make this shop of yours disappear from this world you know? Let’s see. It will be quite heart breaking to see your kawaii subordinates being beaten to pulp right?”

Laius made a show of pulling out the golden necklace that hung around his neck to display it clearly. This necklace that had a skull-like decoration was a power that was sufficient to match up with Demon Lords. The Greatest Gift that [Perseus] possessed.

“Uu…” Shiroyasha clamped her teeth as she stared at Laius and Laius squarely faced that stare with his own.

Both sides maintained this position of a stalemate for a while before the first person to step down turned out to be Shiroyasha.

“That’s right. That’s right. If you’re less stubborn, we do not need to bear any losses. After all, we are all Communities that worship the Twin goddess Flag.”

“……”

“Don’t worry, I won’t kill her. I will just moderate the discipline she gets to make sure that she won’t dare to put up such resistance in the future.”

Wearing his snakeskin jacket once more, he revealed a grin on his clean cut face.

## Part 10

Just as the trio were about to return to the Headquarters, a sudden disturbance could be felt in the air.

At the same time that they lifted their heads to look for the source, a ray of brownish light shone over from a distance away and Leticia immediately gave a loud cry:

“That beam of light……is that the Ray of Medusa?! Not good! I’ve been found!”

Following her panicked cries, Leticia stood before them to shield them with her body, thinking to protect them from the harm of the brown murky ray.

Understanding the nature of that ray, Kuro Usagi gave a scream in grief while staring at the distance.

“A Flag that depicts the head of Medusa……? No……It’s not going to work! Please move aside and dodge it! Leticia-sama!”

But Kuro Usagi’s shout didn’t seem to have much of an effect for Leticia who had been bathed in the brown ray had already been petrified into a stone statue that fell to the side to lie upon the ground.

From the direction where the ray had been emitted from, there appeared to be a large group of guys who were dressed up as knights while wearing flying sandals that had wings sprouting from its sides. And they were rushing towards Leticia in their formation.

“Target found! The vampire has already been petrified. Secure her immediately!”

“There’s also some [No Name] guys around, what are your orders?”

“If they try to impede our mission, you are free to silence them!”

Hearing the words of the Aerial Knights, Izayoi gave a displeased and fierce smile as he said:

“What a headache. This is the first time in my life that I've been taken so lightly, just like an accessory. Should I clap my hands to celebrate this occasion? Or should I just follow my rage and teach them a lesson that they will never forget? Kuro Usagi, which do you think is a better choice?”

“Any…Anyways, let’s just go back to the protection of the Headquarters!”

Although the petrified Leticia was worrying, there seemed to be a greater problem at hand currently.

After all, Leticia was still a possession of [Perseus]. For her to run around without the consent of her master, it was natural that there wasn't ground for any valid complaints. Moreover, [Perseus] was also a part of the branch Communities in [Thousand Eyes] and in the case of a dispute, it would be difficult to imagine any improvements to the situation.

After Kuro Usagi frantically pulled Izayoi into the Headquarters, three of the Aerial Knight squad left their formation to descend to the ground and surrounded the petrified Leticia. While Kuro Usagi and Izayoi hid behind the door to observe the situation outside.

And as the men who were dressed up like knights surrounded and started to use a rope to secure the petrified Leticia, their expressions conveyed their sense of relief.

“My, my, with this, it’s done at last……It sure scared me a little when I thought that she would run again.”

“Yeah, it’s quite a large scale trade that was lucrative enough to make us cancel the Gift Game without hesitation. If we had messed up, we of [Perseus] would have been unable to stay on in [Thousand Eyes].”

“It’s not only that. Although it’s located outside the Little Garden’s Cities, the other trading partner is a Community that is of a national scale. If the goods were to be stolen—“

“Did you say outside Little Garden cities?!”

Kuro Usagi’s cry halted the men who were in about to lift Leticia away.

Hearing the voice of a [No Name] member, the men had immediately taken offense and deemed it to be a hampering of their mission as they turned their hostile gazes towards Kuro Usagi.

However, Kuro Usagi ignored their hostility as she rushed over to protest:

“What’s that about?! The Vampires—[Knights of Little Garden] can only withstand the rays of the Sun within the cities of Little Garden you know?! But for you to send a Vampire just like that out of the Cities of Little Garden……!”

“That’s the deal closed by my leader. Outsiders are to mind their own business!”

The Knight coldly replied before using the winged sandals to take to the skies.

And returning to the squadron in the skies where close to a hundred heavily armored Knights were waiting for orders above the Headquarters of [No Name].

In fact, the unauthorized entry into another Community’s Headquarters was a terrible insult to the invaded Community and wouldn't do well for the invading Community if the news spread about it. Normally speaking, the Merchant Community [Thousand Eyes] that looked upon trust as its main core value wouldn't do such a rude and unreasonable act. And it was clearly a move taken due to their arrogance that didn't see Kuro Usagi and the others as a threat, being merely a [No Name] Community.

“You… You horrid incorrigible people…! Having made so many insults towards us, do you really not intend to apologize for your rudeness?! How dare you guys continue to raise the Twin Goddess Flag with that attitude! Are you guys really that thick skinned?”

“Hmph, to talk politely to such a low level Community located at the lowest of the low levels, that’s even more shameful to our Flag! Being one of the mere [No Name] Community, you should show some awareness of your position!” The men of [Perseus] mocked the agitated Kuro Usagi.

“What….What did you say?!”

Kuro Usagi's body seemed to emit a crackling sound as rage coursed through her entire being. Their treatment towards Leticia and the insults piled upon her Community as well as their insolence for invading had driven Kuro Usagi to the boiling point.

The knights gave a laugh at the sight of Kuro Usagi trembling with rage as they taunted:

“Hmph, do you want to go up against us?”

“How foolish, for a [No Name] that could not even protect their own Flag, there’s no way for them to put up a fight with us at all.”

“You shameless guys! May our Flag bear witness today as Kuro Usagi issues judgment upon your acts of insolence!”

The Knights continued to rain down their curses and insults while raising their Flag depicting Medusa’s head up high while fanning out to form a semicircle around Kuro Usagi. But all those insults were no longer heard by Kuro Usagi who started to smile in a cold and dangerous manner.

Staring at the Knights while smiling that slow and dangerous smile, which was out of her usual character, she chided them:

“Hng…Hng Hng…… How courageous of you. Looks like you guys have amassed quite a number of those Famous Gifts, but do you really think that you will grow any stronger with those sort of replicas?”

“What?”

It was now the Knight’s turn to be enraged. Kuro Usagi allowed her black hair to change to a light shade of red as she leaped into the skies to intimidate the Knights.

“Outrageous…….yes that’s right, it’s downright outrageous! To actually cause the [Moon Rabbit]: innocent, honest, upright, romantic and also the symbol of sacrifice that has been sung in praise to be angered to such an extent……!”

The surrounding air pressure was suddenly charged up to create a heaviness in the air and a power, causing them to experience difficulty in breathing, that assaulted the Knights. And the Knights were suddenly thrown into confusion as the pressure, exuded by Kuro Usagi, weighted down upon them.

And at the moment when Kuro Usagi had raised her right arm, a sharp screech that sounded like the ripping of the atmosphere itself was released and the boom of the explosion similar to thunder had filled the air while a long spear that sparked and shimmered like lightning was now held in her right hand.

Seeing that, the Knights faltered in their stance.

“A Gift that appears together with the sound of thunder……Could…Could that be Indra’s weapon?! Laius-sama did not disclose this information to us!”

“No…Impossible! How can a Divine weapon be possessed by one of the lowest Communities…?!”

“It can’t be the real thing! It must be a replica like ours!”

Kuro Usagi used a back hand grip on the spear that continued to spark with an electrical lightning charge as she said:

“If you cannot determine its authenticity with your eyes—Then use your bodies to experience the truth!”

As the surrounding air was expanded by the increased thermal energies, it gave off a thunderous boom while Kuro Usagi’s hair gave off a light similar to the rainbows from a prism as it slowly dyed over from a shade of red to blue.

Just as Kuro Usagi was about to launch the Indra’s spear into the air, Izayoi suddenly appeared behind her back.

“Oi!”

“Uwa!”

And used his strength to pull on Kuro Usagi's rabbit ears. As her hand slipped, the Indra’s spear had flown in a totally different direction accompanied by a thunderous explosion to strike the skies of Little Garden and release enough lightning and heat to illuminate the veil for many miles around.

“Calm down! Do you want to pick a fight with Shiroyasha?! Even though I've been controlling myself, you have been enjoying yourself without me? What is the meaning of this? Huh, tell me.”

“Uwa! Sorry! Is that the reason why you are angry?”

And Izayoi had been pulling at Kuro Usagi's ears with a rhythmic and strong force to get his point across.

“Itai! Itai neh! It’s really painful, Izayoi-san!”

That last part wasn't just simple strong tugs anymore, but Izayoi had simply lifted Kuro Usagi off the ground by the roots of the rabbit ears.

“It hurts, it hurts, it hurts! It’s….It’s time for you to stop it already, Izayoi-san! Please be aware of the time to play around and the time that you shouldn't do this, okay?! Now, Kuro Usagi needs to let those rude guys have a taste of Divine punishment……”

“They have already gone back, you know?”

“Eh?! They ran a little too fast, didn't they?”

However, the hundred men strong squadron that had disappeared in a flash like smoke in the winds were unable to fool her eyes.

“No……This isn't right……Could it be that they are using some kind of invisibility Gift?”

“If the Community of [Perseus] is the same as the one that I know of, then it is without a doubt that that's the case…..But the world of Little Garden sure is wide, to actually have the existence of Flying Sandals and the Invisibility Helmet as well.”

Izayoi nodded his head in pensiveness as Kuro Usagi glared at him fiercely. Releasing his hold on her ears, Izayoi shook his head at her reaction. “I understand your feelings, but now isn't the best time to act. Though I don’t really mind, but if [No Name] were to have a dispute with [Thousand Eyes], that would be bad wouldn't it?”

“Well….That’s also true…”

“If you want to know more details on the trade, we can just follow the rules to find it out. There are others who are also clear about the situation right?”

Kuro Usagi seemed to have picked up on his meaning and realized with a start. Since it’s Shiroyasha who brought Leticia over, then she might just be in the loop about the business trade as well.

“Call the other guys over.”

“Eh? But…There’s still that thing that happened in the morning.”

“Then calling ochibi-sama and Ojou-sama over will do nicely. I’m getting a whiff of gunpowder in the air and the worst-case scenario would be the start of a Game on the spot. Since that’s a possibility, wouldn't it be better to bring a few more people along?”

—Forget it, even if that's the case, it would be enough with me alone.

Although that’s what Izayoi really thought in his mind, he wouldn't say that out loud. After all, he was a person who could read the situation around him. But that would only be his claim.

# Chapter 6

## Part 1

As the night slipped into the small hours, the stars twinkled in the Heavens beside a full moon that was late by a night which shone upon the world of Little Garden with its soft glow.

The street lamps illuminated the roads and pathways with its slight but sufficient light but there seemed to be no one out and about tonight for no presences could be detected in the vicinity. Walking along the path, Izayoi who maintained his fast stroll gazed up upon the skies while muttering to himself:

“It’s such a beautiful night with stars dotting the Heavens and yet there’s no one else out for a stroll. If this were to be found in my world, such a location would have required an entrance fee already.”

The city that Izayoi used to stay in before coming to Little Garden is a 24-hour city that never sleeps.

The bright glare of neon lights, the vehicles that sped along the roads and their resultant cacophony that never seemed to tire out from their long journeys. The sounds of laughter and entertainment centers that opened till the wee hours of the morning, the buzz and throng of people on the streets that made up the era where many devious temptations were abound. For Izayoi who had lived in that sort of generation, to be able to look up at a star filled sky in a place where humans lived was quite a refreshing experience for him. On the contrary, for Kudou Asuka who had arrived from the era not long after the World War, the question that had arose in her heart from the sight of the star filled skies was of a different reason.

“It’s normal for the full moon to be that bright and distinct in the skies but why is it that the stars are not affected by it? Isn’t that strange?”

“It’s because Little Garden’s veil has been designed to make the stars more easily visible.”

“Is that so? But how does it bring any good to them?”

She could understand the reason behind the veil being designed to allow the supposedly nocturnal Vampires to be unharmed by the Sun’s rays. However, for the stars were made to be more distinct was an action that she did not understand for she saw no good reasons to back it. Kuro Usagi who had originally taken the lead with her hurried and anxious small jog had then slowed down her steps to try explaining the phenomenon.

“Oh, that’s because……”

“Oi Oi, Ojou-sama, isn’t your question a little too cold and unfeeling by looking only at the benefits? Can’t you understand the crafter’s soul that has the ‘Desire to make the stars look more beautiful at night’ kind of thought?”

“Ara, that sure sounds quite amazing and thoughtful while being romantic at the same time.”

“……That…That’s also right.”

Kuro Usagi deliberately left it as that without denying it outright. Since the both of them had already accepted that sort of answer that they had come up with, she was willing to leave it at that for now. After all the true explanation would take some time and they were just a few steps away from reaching the shop.

And standing at the doorway of [Thousand Eyes] to welcome the trio was the usual expressionless female shop assistant.

“Your arrival has been long awaited. The shop manager and Laius-sama are waiting for you inside.”

“You mean to say that you have already known that we would be coming? Having done that sort of rude thing to us and you still have the cheek to say ‘Your arrival has been long awaited’?”

“……I do not know the details of the situation, please enter to ask Laius-sama directly.”

Hearing that sort of reply caused Kuro Usagi to almost erupt in rage again but her common sense triumphed as she understood that it wouldn’t change matters even if she took it out verbally on the shop assistant.

Kuro Usagi and the others then entered the shop to pass through the courtyard that led to other buildings in the grounds of the shop.

Laius who was inside a room that was used to receive the trio had immediately cheered in an exaggerated fashion upon seeing Kuro Usagi:

“Woah! It’s a rabbit! Wow! It’s my first time seeing one! Although I had already heard of the rumors, but I didn’t expect that the East side would really have a rabbit! The miniskirt and garter belt sure looks pretty erotic! I say~why not come over to my Community?! I will provide you three meals, a collar and loving tender care every night for you!”

Laius didn’t even bother about hiding his true nature. He eyed Kuro Usagi up and down hungrily as his eyes lapped up every small detail in an obscene manner that brought him great joy.

Disgusted by his actions, Kuro Usagi had quickly moved her hands to cover her legs and Asuka had also stepped forth, seemingly to act as a screen that blocked Kuro Usagi from view.

“And this is……obviously a villain before us. I will state it clearly from the start that these sexy thighs are something that belong to us.”

“That’s right, that’s right! Kuro Usagi’s legs belong…EH?! NO, that’s not right, Asuka-san!”

Hearing that sudden and nonsensical declaration of ownership, Kuro Usagi had panicked while doing a tsukomi.

Izayoi watched them before giving a disapproving sigh:

“That’s right, Ojou-sama, these beautiful thighs already belong to me.”

“That’s right, that’s right! These beau…….Ah mo, enough, please shut up!”

“Okay, then you guys name a price……”

“Shiroyasha-sama! KURO. USAGI. IS. NOT. FOR. SALE! Ah~really now. We have come to this place to talk about serious matters, please have some reserve on jokes. Kuro Usagi is almost going to lose her temper!”

“Baka, I’m deliberately trying to make you angry.”

*Pak!* The paper fan drew a sharp trajectory in the air as Kuro Usagi seemed to be easily irritable today.

As for the original focus that was on Laius, he was now completely left out and ignored.

Gaping at the sight as the four of them finally ended their banter, he then abruptly burst into laughter.

“Ahahahahaha! Huh? Is that so? You guys of the [No Name] are a group of actors that form a Community? If that’s the case, come over to [Perseus] together! To tell the truth, I really like to spend generous amounts of money on food, drink and entertainment! I promise to take care of you guys for life you know? Needless to

say, those delicious thighs will have to obediently spread its doorway on my bed every night too."

"Rejected. Kuro Usagi has no intention of letting guys who do not understand the meaning of etiquette and manners to see her body."

Kuro Usagi said it with disgust and disdain in her voice but Izayoi who sat next to her made a dig at her:

"Huh? I had always thought that the reason for your dressing is for the desire to be seen?"

"That's…That's not it! This is something that Shiroyasha-sama asked Kuro Usagi to wear when Kuro Usagi served the role as Judge for her hosted Games. She had promised Kuro Usagi to pay triple the amount if I could be in this attire at any time and place. So Kuro Usagi had reluctantly…"

"Oh? Reluctantly being forced to wear that sort of clothing is it…….? Oi, Shiroyasha."

"What, lad?"

Izayoi glared at Shiroyasha fiercely. After exchanging their stares for some time, they raised their right hand at the same time.

"Very GOOD JOB!"

"Umu"

Both sides had given each other a thumbs up and acquired a new camaraderie. Realizing that the topic wasn't progressing at all, Kuro Usagi could only hang her head down helplessly. Just then, the shop assistant outside the building gave her assistance to the situation.

“Well, the number of guests has increased and if everyone’s willing, would you like to shift to the guest room in the shop’s interior? After all there’s also some shattered dishes in here.”

“Well……that sounds about right.”

And hence the group who decided to start the discussions anew headed over to the guest room of [Thousand Eyes].

Part 2

Upon arriving in the room, they had taken up their positions with the trio facing the two of the [Thousand Eyes] cadres as they sat down respectively. Laius who sat at the other end of the long table continued to gaze at Kuro Usagi lustily.

Although Kuro Usagi felt the chills from it, but she was determined to ignore Laius's gaze as she poured out the situation to Shiroyasha.

"—The rude behavior of [Perseus] is as aforementioned, may Kuro Usagi confirm that you have understood the matter?"

"Well……eh. The Vampire owned by [Perseus] had trespassed the [No Name] territory and caused some damage; and the members of [Perseus] who had been dispatched to capture the mentioned Vampire had acted in an offensive manner in speech and behavior. I hereby confirm that I've received your complaint. If you wish to have an apology from [Perseus], then I will arrange another day for……"

"There's no need for that. Having suffered such an insulting and insolent behavior from them, just an apology will not be able to quell Kuro Usagi's anger. We believe that the humiliation that we've suffered from [Perseus] should be solved by a fight between our Communities."

To snare the other Community into a direct confrontation, that's the goal of Kuro Usagi's plan.

Of course, the complaints lodged against Leticia for having wreaked havoc in the territory were naturally a fabrication. However, in order to regain Leticia, now wasn't the time to care about such minor details. As long as it's a means to achieve the aim, one must take all that can be used to further one's own advantage.

“We have come here today in hope that [Thousand Eyes] can revoke the withdrawal, if [Perseus] rejects our request, then may you utilize the name of the [Host Master]……”

“I object.”

Laius suddenly cut in.

“……Eh?”

“I don’t want to, what fight are you talking about? Is that a joke? And do you have any evidence to show that the Vampire had wrecked your place?”

“Regarding that point, we can just release her petrification to……”

“No way. That fellow has already escaped once so before the time of the transaction, I will not release the petrification. And there’s also a possibility that you guys have already plotted in the dark about it already right? Am I right? FORMER COMRADE?”

Laius smiled as his words dripped with sarcasm. Due to the reasonable argument that he had, Kuro Usagi was also unable to refute that.

“Going to the root of the problem, the vampire’s reason for escape should be to find you guys, right? Or could it be that you guys were out to steal my possession?”

“What…What are you saying?! Where’s the evidence for that base…”

“Isn’t it a fact that the Vampire was found in your territory?”

*Uu* Kuro Usagi was silent. When the opponent used that point to push the attack, they would be unable to refute. After all, whether it was the proposition brought up by Kuro Usagi or Laius, they both lacked the witness from a third party to back them up. Laius gave a wicked smile as he pressed the offensive:

“Forget it, if you guys really want to make the situation escalate into a duel, then we will just have to make a thorough investigation of the case……but the one who will be in trouble by the thorough investigation won’t be me~”

“Tha… That's…”

Kuro Usagi shifted her gaze to Shiroyasha. Since the other party had brought up her name, Kuro Usagi couldn’t do anything as well. After all in the period of the last three years, the reason for the [No Name] being able to survive that long was all due to the assistance received from Shiroyasha.

Kuro Usagi would really like to prevent causing more trouble for her due to this unfortunate saga.

“Well then, I will be taking my leave to rush back to prepare the transport for the Vampire to be sent out to the buyer’s location. I really detest women that give the cold shoulder, especially those that have a physical appearance that isn’t any different from that of a child—but I guess as you guys know, that fellow looks quite cute and for people who have a fetish for that sort of thing, it must be like a rare specimen? And there’s also those people who like to break down strong willed women by stripping them down and locking them in cuffs to brutally wear them down till she moans. In the natural prison of sunlight to have a female become an eternal toy……don’t you find that erotic?”

Laius taunted them by describing the various possible disastrous outcomes of Leticia who was about to be handed to that sort of person.

And as expected, Kuro Usagi had bristled her rabbit ears as she shouted.

“You… You’re such a……!”

“But that fellow sure is pitiful. Not only in the process of being sold out of Little Garden but also to be pulled down by shameless comrades to even transfer her Gift to the Demon Lord.”

“……what did you say?”

The one who shot that question was Asuka for she had not heard of Leticia’s situation and was surprised to learn it for the first time from Laius.

Although Kuro Usagi remained silent, it was obvious from her expression that she was faltering inside.

Laius did not let go of this opportunity.

“What a fellow that can’t receive any reward in return for her stupidity. [Gift]s are the indispensable life line for survival in this world and are also a part of the soul. But in order to prevent her stupid incompetent comrades from doing something absurdly futile and to discard all those willingly? The problem is that the freedom she obtained was just an illusion. In addition to that, upon suffering the greatest humiliation of ‘becoming another’s possession’ to rush back to her comrades, those comrades had just forsaken her!

It would really be interesting to know what she feels when she wakes up.”

“……Huh……..What……”

Kuro Usagi was stumped and her face had rapidly turned pale.

At the same time, it had solved many of the mysteries for them. Be it the reason why Leticia who had been snatched away by the Demon Lord reappearing once more in the East Side or the reason behind the sudden drop in level that was denoted on the Gift card, those had just been answered by Laius’s words.

Leticia who had wanted to see Kuro Usagi and the others once more—wouldn't even mind sacrificing her soul.

Laius was full of smiles as he reached out his right hand to the pale faced Kuro Usagi.

"I say, Kuro Usagi-san, if you are to just let her go like this, wouldn't that stand against the moral codes between comrades of the same Community?"

"……? What do you mean?"

"Let's do a trade. I can allow the vampire to return to [No Name] but in return, the price would be you. You will have to belong to me forever."

"What……?"

"This should be regarded as a form of love at first sight, right? And this sort of rare to come by 'Gold-plated' [Highborn of Little Garden] should not be left to waste."

Kuro Usagi was stumped into silence once more. However Asuka who couldn't seem to rein in her anger anymore gave a roar of outrage while slamming her palm into the table:

"Although I had known that you were a bastard, never did I expect you to be of such an incorrigible extent! Kuro Usagi, let's go! There's no need to listen anymore to the rubbish from this guy!"

"Please…Please wait a moment, Asuka-san!"

Asuka had held onto Kuro Usagi's hand wanting to leave but Kuro Usagi stood fast and wasn't willing to exit the room.

Self-doubt had started to cloud her eyes and it was obvious that the request was making her waver to the point of feeling troubled.

Recognizing the seed of doubt growing in her, Laius gave another of his annoying smiles once more as he triumphantly continued to push his proposition:

“Hey, hey, you are a [Moon Rabbit] right? As long as it’s for a comrade, even if you need to withstand the purgatory flames that will burn your body, you would still desire to brave it for the sake of the comrade right? It is after all a talent which is like second nature to your race!”

“……Uu!”

“Hey, I say, what’s the matter? Rabbits like what they call moralities and repaying the debts of others right? Weren’t your powers and trust obtained from Indra obtained through using your cheap life on a cheap sacrifice that reaped some benefits? Since the reason for your race’s existence in Little Garden is due to the summoning in remembrance of your kind’s sacrifice, why not follow the way of your kind and simply accept this casual offer? Hey, what do you think about that Kuro Usagi…”

“Shut your trap!”

*Kak!* Laius’s lower jaw met its upper half and the lips were sealed tight as a sudden look of confusion came over his face. This was the result of Asuka’s power as she couldn’t bear to see it continue any further.

“……!……?”

“You have displeased me. Just stay that way and grovel in apology!”

Confused while clamping his mouth shut, Laius started to bend forward. However, he started to resist the command in the next moment and he forced himself to stand up. Realizing what had caused him to do such an act, Laius forced his mouth over to growl:

“Oi! Bitch! This power……can only—work on inferior people! You fool!”

Enraged, Laius drew his Gift Card and following pulled out a Harpe from the flash of light.

He swung down his blade but Izayoi who had been bidding his time moved before Asuka like in an attempt to shield her as he took the blow.

“You…and you are….?”

“I’m the handsome Izayoi-sama. If you want to fight, I don’t mind adding interest to it before collecting the debt you know? Of course, I will give you the rate of 100% increase per ten days.”

Izayoi lightly laughed as he gripped the handle of the sword and returned it to Laius with a kick.

Unable to take the attack, Laius had leapt back and pulled away to place some distance between them as he started to judge on the next move to follow up the attacks on his opponent.

However, the Harpe was held down by Shiroyasha’s fan.

“Enough! Stop it this instant! You fools! If you are unable to resolve this by negotiations, I will chase you guys out of the room!”

“…Pui! But it’s that woman who started it first.” Laius spat as he continued to glower with a killing intent.

At this point, Kuro Usagi also stepped between them to offer a closure.

“Yes we understand. Then for all the things that occurred today, let’s just leave it be and not pursue the matters anymore……On the other hand, regarding the previous offer,……Please give Kuro Usagi some time to consider.”

Kuro Usagi's reply caused Asuka to be taken aback as she couldn't help but shout loudly:

"Wait…Wait a moment! Kuro Usagi! You mean that you are willing to become that sort of fellow's possession?!"

"…….Because there's still a need to discuss with Kuro Usagi's comrades, please give me some time."

"OKOK! Then let's set the date till the last day before my Community seals the deal……I will wait for a week then."

Laius was full of smiles and Kuro Usagi had left the room straight after saying all that she had to say.

Asuka had also followed her out while Izayoi who continued to stand at his original spot gave a disapproving shrug of his shoulders.

"Wow! Shiroyasha, you are quite fortunate you know? Being sandwiched between a friend who's difficult to be handled and an inferior subordinate is quite an unusual experience right?"

"Sheesh, what a thing to say, but if you really envy this position, I can always switch with you."

"Not now……but come to think about it, the leader of [Perseus] is you?"

"What? That's me alright, but what kind of rhetorical question is that coming from you at this time after all that has happened?"

Laius's tone sounded quite irritable which was understandable when considering all that has transpired thus far.

Izayoi stared at Laius for a moment before giving a seemingly disappointed sigh as he turned away to take his leave.

“—Stop right there, what did you mean by that sigh, huh?”

“It’s such a misnomer. And I’m such a fool for holding on to such anticipation……well, just that sort of meaning.”

“Hmph! If that’s the case, I may even bend my rules and accept a cheap challenge to a duel you know?”

Laius raised his Harpe. At the end of the day, he’s still the leader who leads [Perseus], having defeated many demigods and gods to establish their Headquarters in the Five digit Outer Gates. His strength was clearly of a different level from normal humans. Although in the earlier bout he may seem to have lost, but if it were an actual battle, Laius was confident without a trace of doubt that he would win. Izayoi lifted a brow as he reassessed Laius, but he had left the room in the end with a loss of interest.

## Part 3

Having passed through the Fountain plaza, Kuro Usagi had reached the Peribed Way. Whereas, Asuka who ran to catch up with her shouted her protests:

“Kuro Usagi what are you planning to do! It can’t be that you really want to become that guy’s possession do you?”

“——……Uu!”

Asuka raised her voice as she chased after Kuro Usagi, who was looking down and taking large strides with her legs.

With a surprisingly fiery spirit, she grabbed Kuro Usagi from behind and stared at her with eyes that continued to seethe like molten lava as she stuffed the Invitation Letter that had summoned the trio at Kuro Usagi’s chest. And as she couldn’t hold back those angry emotions that surged though her mind and heart, Asuka began to read out the contents of the Invitation Letter:

“ ‘You shall cast aside your family, friends, possessions, everything in the world of yours.

And come forth to our [Little Garden].’—

You who have summoned us in this fashion and yet you’re now deciding to leave the Community? This sort of behavior can only be counted as abandoning your responsibility!”

“……Kuro Usagi doesn’t intend…… to do that……”

“No! You’re lying! It’s clearly shown on your face! You believe that it won’t matter even if you have to sell yourself to help your comrades! But rest assured that we will never allow you to do such a foolish and futile act!”

“Fu…Futile…Why must you describe it with such a term!”

Kuro Usagi couldn't take it anymore and she too replied with a loud cry. Be it from Laius or from Asuka, Kuro Usagi didn't understand why she had to receive such strong criticisms from people around her.

Although she was gasping a little due to her extreme agitation, Kuro Usagi who waited a moment to calm herself continued with a retort:

"Comrades are very important to a Community and there's nothing that can be more important than the comrades who stand by you. Moreover for Leticia-sama who could even willingly sacrifice her own soul and harm her body to rush over upon hearing trouble brewing in her former Community, don't you think that we should at least take some responsibility to do everything we can to do what is morally right?!"

"But doesn't that mean that you will just be her substitute?! That sort of action makes no sense!"

"Sacrificing for your comrade. How can that make no sense to you?!"

"Stop shouting in the middle of the night, it's so annoying."

Having been shoved by Izayoi, the heads of the two females knocked on each other with a *Bam!*.

The sudden impact caused the both of them to see stars.

""~~~~~!""

"I got the gist of your arguments. But before everything else, if I'm allowed to give my opinion……Kuro Usagi, you're in the wrong."

"Wha…Why is that so?!"

Kuro Usagi had teared up as she clutched her forehead to give her protest. Izayoi looked at her coldly as he chided:

“The invitation letter is the first reason. Next is……When Leticia had arrived at the [No Name] territory, she should already have mentally prepared herself for the things to come and did her gaze back then seem to be pleading to you to save her?”

“This….This isn’t right! To say that you shouldn’t lend a hand because the other had not asked for help can only be called a sophistry.”

“Indeed, but we must also look at the situation. Isn’t the reason for Leticia to keep her loss of her Gift a secret due to her wish of not allowing you to become her substitute?”

*Uu!* Kuro Usagi also seemed to have recalled that and was now at a loss for words.

Indeed, Leticia didn’t seem to want anyone to know that she had lost her Gift.

In other words Leticia did not wish for her feelings to become the burden of Kuro Usagi and the others to carry.

“And Ojou-sama, your choice of words is much too shoddy, you should be much gentler when expressing your mind.

Such as —‘I’m really really worried about you, Kuro Usagi! Please! Stay by my side!’ or something along that note.”

“It’s not like I’m stopping her because of that.”

However, that must have been at least a quarter of the truth at least.

Seeing Asuka blush to the tips of her ears, Kuro Usagi had also bent her head feeling awkward.

“I’m….I’m really sorry. Although your feelings really make Kuro Usagi happy……but that……Kuro Usagi doesn’t really swing that way……”

“Why must you choose this sort of place and time to twist the meaning? Hm, okay. That’s just as well then. You should always look at things as optimistically as this, you Baka Usagi!”

Asuka shouted as she grabbed the rabbit ears and gave a forceful tug, causing Kuro Usagi to give off a very unladylike scream.

Perhaps the two women had calmed down after their playful banter, they had exhaled heavily to say in a soft voice:

“……Indeed, I’m worried about you for you had looked close to breaking down.”

“Kuro…Kuro Usagi should be the one apologizing… Kuro Usagi had clearly been too impulsive earlier.”

And no matter what the future may hold for them after today, they would still need to discuss with Jin and Yō and the trio decided to return to the [No Name] Headquarters first.

## Part 4

—Five days after that incident.

The location being at the Five Digit region of Little Garden, Outer Gate Number 26745, [Thousand Eyes] Number 88th Territory.

Outer Gate Number 26745 is one of the Outer Gates managed by the [Floor Master] Shiroyasha who lived a level above it.

And located within her sphere of influence was the territory of [Perseus] that was similarly affiliated under the flag of [Thousand Eyes]. However, currently the flags hung around the white palace of the [Perseus] territory was only that of a white base depicting a ‘Medusa’s head’. On the other hand, the flags with a red background depicting the Twin Goddess were not hung out.

This is because Shiroyasha had exposed the conflict between [Perseus] and Kuro Usagi and the others while making known the dishonorable incident. Hence [Perseus] had been ordered to put away all flags of [Thousand Eyes] indefinitely.

Standing at the balcony of the highest floor in the white washed palace while looking down at the lower floors, Laius murmured to his trusted aide who stood by him to await his orders:

“It’s been five days since that time and I thought that Kuro Usagi would be sure to find me to negotiate. In the end there’s not even a sign of it happening. It sure is unfortunate and I had thought that I would definitely be able to obtain the [Moon Rabbit] this time too.”

“But is it really okay like this? We of [Perseus] being able to stay at the territory located at the five digit Outer Gate is all thanks to [Thousand Eyes] that has acted as our support. Since there now comes the order issued for us to stash away the flags……”

“Ah~Hm, the worst possible result would be the order for us to move our Community’s territory down by a level I guess. Forget it, it’s nothing to worry about. Or should I say that it’s better like this? After all dad has already passed on and to go to the root of the problem, just depending on us to continue staying in the Outer Gates of the five digits is indeed quite troublesome right? Or are you willing to support this whole Community?”

The male trusted aide revealed a dejected look. Although Laius had said all that, but it wasn’t impossible if they really wanted to stay in the five digit Outer Gate because Laius possessed the strongest Gift that holds a power that Demon Lords needed to be careful around.

As long as Laius used his leadership to bring all the members of the Community together, they who were his subordinates would also be able to receive a twelfth of the reward be it joining as a [Host] or a Participant.

However, Laius had never shown that sort of motivation even once.

“But seriously, that rabbit’s really cute! Although she has that baby face, her voluptuous breasts and beautiful thighs are really sexy! Willing to sacrifice and contribute for others, strong-hearted, cute and a beauty that’s really sexy, it sure fits my type of taste! Originally I had wanted to take this chance to leave [Thousand Eyes] and use the rabbit as my substitute brand name but it would really be a waste to display her before the other people! If only I can get her on my bed to make her moan a few times for my ears to relish, I swear that I will never tire of it!”

“……Oh……”

The male trusted aide replied while giving a deep sigh. The only three topics that Laius would enthusiastically talk about were only women, money and enjoyments

in food and drink. He was just similar to the personification of the meaning of Hedonism.

And it was especially worse during the last five days. Perhaps that Kuro Usagi really did catch his eye? He had spent both day and night talking about it while the documents of the Community had already piled up to form a small mountain-like stack in the office and Laius would not even take a look at them.

Even though it's an emergency in the Community that was caused by him, he still intends to push his responsibilities to others to settle for him.

(Even if this goes on, we must not set a precedent by processing the documents for him…….As I thought, we can only wait for him to take initiative in processing the official documents?)

The male trusted aide gave a shake of his head forlornly. Just at that moment, a female voice sounded on the balcony that was supposed to have only the both of them.

"Sorry for the intrusion in the night to disturb you, Laius-sama."

"WHO'S THAT?!"

The male trusted aide drew his sword as he shouted out, suddenly alert. And the person who lightly landed on the balcony was none other than Kuro Usagi of the [No Name].

Laius immediately pushed away his trusted aide to greet her happily:

"Woah! What brings you here so suddenly today?! You've finally decided to join us over here right?"

"……Kuro Usagi came regarding that matter for tomorrow we would be hosting a discussion between our Community representatives, may we ask you to spare some time to attend?"

Kuro Usagi had a worried expression as she relayed her message. In comparison, Laius was really overjoyed as he spread his arms.

"OKOK! If that vampire isn't enough, I might be able to add some other conditions!"

"Laius-sama! The [Knight of Little Garden] is already in the final stages of the trade deal……"

The male trusted aide hurriedly stepped forth to protest but Laius only gave him a kick in the chest to cut him off.

Maintaining her pained look, Kuro Usagi had nodded once more before leaping off from the balcony to take her leave.

On the other hand, Laius had started to laugh and whoop as he spread his arms to happily spin in a circle.

"Hahaha, this is great! With this, there won't be any more need to show adulation and shower flattery over our advertising medium of [Thousand Eyes]! Luck's finally on my side!"

He showed no civility as he roared in laughter while looking at the skies, looking as if he had lost his mind.

His trusted aide could only give a heavier sigh as he watched his master spinning around continuously while laughing like a madman.

(But to think that Kuro Usagi would be willing to accept the negotiation is it really impossible for them to escape their bloodline that compels them to sacrifice and contribute?)

Although the severing from [Thousand Eyes] had been a big loss to them, if they could really obtain the [Highborn of Little Garden] in return, it would still be quite a good deal. As long as they could form a Community that had that ‘golden plated signboard’, they could even find the Evil spirit of Rakshasa of the North or even the Eudemons of the South to negotiate a Game of equal footing.

If they were to become an independent community, this might just be more beneficial in results.

Although Laius may be violent and lustful, but after using Kuro Usagi as a toy, it would at best last a month before he gets sick of his toy.

Normal women might not be able to last till then but strong hearted rabbits shouldn’t have such a problem right? As long as there’s still life in her, it would still be usable as a mascot no matter what the situation might be.

Maybe they could just completely teach her body until it became obedient to their commands.

The loyal male trusted aide poured another cup of wine into his master’s empty cup as he took another dissatisfied but forlorn glance at the mountain of documents on the table.

# Chapter 7

## Part 1

—Let's rewind time back to two days ago. Under the orders of Jin, Kuro Usagi was now sent and locked in her room to reflect on her actions. Standing beside her bedroom window while using her finger to draw across the water droplets that were rolling down the window pane, Kuro Usagi gazed out at Little Garden that was currently raining.

(Oh, it looks like it's the periodic rainfall period? Hm, unlike the South Side, the East isn't going to release the Veil.)

Artificial rainfall events were to be executed at fixed intervals. Only during the allotted time for the rainfall period would the Little Garden's Veil have a visible change in appearance by using the manipulation of light to create an optical illusion that would be perceived as rain clouds.

In other words, although the rainclouds didn't exist, they would create the illusion of 'there are clouds in the sky' before releasing the rain.

…To be honest, this was quite a high level technique that served no purpose. If there was a need for water, they could just release the Veil when it rained outside or even just do away with the need of the raincloud illusion and just release the showers. To actually allow such an astounding miraculous technique to be fully utilized on such a small point due to one's own interest, it could only be said to be consistent with the style of Little Garden to have such a generous act of consideration.

(Forget it. Little Garden's function is in itself mainly centered about the idea of entertainment and recreation. To nit-pick on such things would just be a waste of time, right?)

The storm is one of the important factors to add a touch of artistry to the unique characteristic of the seasons. From the ancient times, deities and demigods had always hidden in the clouds while transporting these natural disasters, the presence of rain clouds would then stand to have quite a significant meaning to them.

If it were accompanied by a violent storm streaked with lightning and the rumble of thunder, Humans would assume that it's the result of the Dragon's Divine power. Hence the origin of the reverence towards Dragon kind.

However if it were a Sunshower, it would be believed as the work of some mage practicing his or her ritual in a remote region somewhere.

For the cities of Little Garden, just saying that there were eight million Gods would still be way below the actual numbers. For the number of Gods and deities who created this world of Little Garden have legends and mythologies that would fill the world to the brim and more with all their respective stories compiled together.

(Come to think of it, Leticia-sama doesn't seem to like the rain….? Something about the uncomfortable smell of moisture and the metallic tang of blood being stifling and unable to dissipate…)

What words to say when she's clearly a Vampire, right? Kuro Usagi gave a bitter laugh as she recalled that conversation.

Just as she resumed her gloomy gaze at the scene outside the window, a corridor echoed with the sound of someone giving a restrained knock on her door

"Well~The door is locked and there's no one in at the moment des~"

"……That means that we can enter?"

"I guess so?"

The voices belonged to Kudou Asuka and Kasukabe Yō. Although Kuro Usagi had clearly said ‘there’s no one in’, but they still took it for a reply of ‘you may enter’. What in the world could they be planning?

“Ara, it’s really locked.”

“Hm……it’s true, force our way?

*Kacha Kacha* The sounds of the doorknob being twisted and the lock mechanism preventing it from opening travelled into Kuro Usagi’s ears and she stood up seemingly to give up her pointless resistance.

“Okay Okay, Kuro Usagi will unlock it now! You two should learn to be gentler or maybe it should be said as more tactful…”

“Might as well just destroy it?”

“You’re right.”

*Pak!*

“Gentle and tactful!”

“You’re so noisy!”

Kuro Usagi who was chided by the both of them could only shut her mouth obediently.

It would seem that when up against the problem children of a different world, the wooden door just didn’t stand a chance.

Kuro Usagi drooped her rabbit ears as she clutched the broken door handle to burst into a wail.

Not bothering to wipe her tears, Kuro Usagi just took her own thermos to start preparing tea. And during this time, Asuka and Yō had also poured the contents of

a small bag that they had brought along with them onto a small plate. It would seem that the contents were actually hand-made snacks.

"……could it be that you two……?"

"No, it was made by the children of the Community."

"The fox-eared girl and the other older children had brought this to us saying 'Please patch up with Kuro Usagi onee-san!'"

The three of them had an indescribable and complicated look of their faces then.

Three days ago, after recounting the incident that had taken place at [Thousand Eyes], Jin and Yō had acted as was expected of them as they were also against the idea of Kuro Usagi's departure. Jin taking the viewpoint of a Community's leader while Yō based on the position of being new friends.

There was no malicious intent then but it was just a difficult situation to speak in for everyone had been too agitated to think clearly.

But after Asuka joined the fray, the situation quickly went out of hand and to calm the situation down, Jin made the call for her to do some self-reflection while locked in her room.

Whereas Izayoi who was the only one who was adamant about being just an observer to the whole saga had dropped a line of 'I will be going to play around in Little Garden' and had left, never to be seen since then. And everyone assumed that he might have gotten tired of [No Name] already.

The children must have also picked up on the charged atmosphere as well and after much thought on what they could do to help, the answer now lay in the plate of snacks before them.

“Those children sure are a despicable lot. Seeing how they had come running over with tears in their eyes to plead us, I think only evil spirits or demons would reject them?”

“No, Asuka, everyone already helped to create this chance for us, we must make the reconciliation a success.”

Asuka gave a harrumph as she turned her head away while Yō tried to coax her.

Seeing this scene before her, Kuro Usagi had also worn a troubled smile.

“You’re right……Everyone in the Community would be really worried if we do not get our act together.”

“Yes, that’s the case. So although it might not sound fair to you, but we won’t allow you to go to another place. The core of this Community isn’t Jin-chan nor is it us. But it’s you who have invited us to join and supported this Community single-handedly till now, Kuro Usagi.”

“……yes that’s right.”

Those were also the words that Jin had said to Kuro Usagi. He had said that if Kuro Usagi were to leave now, the Community would definitely be unable to hold up.

Be it the children who have been entrusted to her care or Izayoi and the others whom she had invited to join the Community.

The one who carried all the burden was none other than Kuro Usagi, herself.

“……I’ve heard from Asuka that the [Moon Rabbit] that you speak of is that of the legend?”

“YES. All the rabbit race in Little Garden have the same origin and that is the [Moon Rabbit]s.”

— The [Moon Rabbit]. In order to save an injured old man, a rabbit willingly leapt into the flames to offer its body and blood. That was one of the stories in the collection of Buddhist teachings. In Buddhism, suicide is seen to be a great sin. But the rabbit's act is seen to be one of mercy and self-sacrifice, leading to Indra's summon to create the first Moon Rabbit.

And the rabbits of Little Garden were the descendants of that [Moon Rabbit].

"Because of our ability to draw our power from the core of Little Garden, a [Moon Rabbit] will experience a change in color from the hair to the rabbit ears when they use their power. But there are also some differences between individuals too."

"Oh I see now. So that means the alarming roll of thunder three days ago had also been Kuro Usagi's doing?"

"Yes, a small portion of rabbits can call on the power of our first ancestor, the Herald of Indra to possess the Authority to wield Indra's weapons. If up against normal opponents, Kuro Usagi will never lose!"

*Hei Hei* Kuro Usagi proudly puffed her chest and perked her ears in pride.

"But when you want to join Gift Games, they will limit the qualification of the Participants right?"

"Well……yes, that's true."

Her rabbit ears flopped down once more. Observing the rabbit ears that easily showed her true feelings, Yō and Asuka were quite impressed by that function.

"But it's still quite surprising. Because when we talk about [Moon Rabbit]s, it's something that's so well known that it can also be found in the records of Man'yōshū. And it's something that is quite famous in my world."

"Is ……Is that so?"

“Nn—But, We do not intend to let you jump into the fire. Because we, the three of us……were summoned over by your invitation letter after all.”

Holding the invitation letter in her hand, Yō reached out her hand to lightly rest it over Kuro Usagi’s hand.

‘You shall cast aside your family, friends, possessions and everything in the world of yours.

And come forth to our [Little Garden].’

For the trio who have been summoned by that letter, this was a catch phrase that really struck a chord in them time and time again.

And the whole reason why the trio who have already been sick and tired of their previous worlds were able to muster up an enthusiasm in life was all thanks to Kuro Usagi who approached them with that phrase. Truly that and for no other reason.

If she were to leave for another Community, then for what reason did the trio come to Little Garden is a question that one might ask.

Giving a smile as she seemed to have reached a decision, but also partially one that signaled her surrender, Kuro Usagi opened her mouth to give her reply:

“……Well, Kuro Usagi apologizes for having said such irresponsible words. Don’t worry. It’s fine now.”

“Is that so? Then it’s about time that we start discussing the battle strategies already.”

“Yep, if only there were some constructive context to work on, we would be good to go.”

—EEH? Although Kuro Usagi let out a sound of having been lost amidst the discussion, the duo continued to discuss their matters while paying her no mind.

“I think the only way would be to just participate in Gift Games and obtain any kind of Gift that we can get and just continue in this pattern.”

“No. Time’s too short to do that. If we want to prepare something that the other party will want to lay his hand on no matter what the cost is….we will first need some information and context. Kuro Usagi, do you have any clues on that?”

“Eh? Eh?”

Although Kuro Usagi looked as though her thoughts had been thrown into disarray, but she had caught on to what they were discussing.

In other words, Asuka and Yō had not given up.

Not giving up on Kuro Usagi while not abandoning Leticia.

Asuka and Yō had come to find Kuro Usagi to discuss the battle strategy even though they hadn't met Leticia before. Those kind of feelings reached Kuro Usagi and the rims of her eye started to redden.

“Asuka-san, Yō-san…… Kuro Usagi’s really thankful for both of you.”

“If you want to thank us, do that after we have brought the person back. What’s more important currently is the battle strategy. Is there something that can be used to tempt the other party into accepting our negotiations besides Kuro Usagi……or is there a way to make the opponent play a Game against us with the Vampire girl as the bet?”

“That……That would really be some useful item….”

Having said that, they could only look for a solution in this direction. Kuro Usagi used her hand to prop her chin as she started to run though the options.

There were many precious gifts that slumbered deep in the Community’s treasury and it ranged from precious swords, Divine spears, Enchanted Bows and many other famous weapons and equipment but each and every one of them had many

requirements to be met to be usable, making them items that were picky about their owners. Although there were also some Greek artifacts in their storage, Kuro Usagi couldn't imagine Laius to be that sort of person who would want to collect items that related to his cultural history.

Looking from how they, [Perseus] had invaded their territory to the time when they had conversed in Shiroyasha's shop with Laius.

Just judging from the character that he displayed from the events above, Kuro Usagi didn't think that those items would be able to interest Laius enough to make the case negotiable.

"……No, it's really tough. [Perseus] is an organization that leans most of the authoritative power towards the decision of the Community leader. If we want to nudge [Perseus] into action, we can only think from the direction of instigating Laius into action for there's no other way. Shiroyasha-sama had said that he's a person who's addicted to drinking, enjoyment; and lustful. If we don't know his interests, there's really no……"

"Then, let's look at it from a different direction shall we? Is there a kind of situation where even if Laius holds the final say, [Perseus] will still have to make a move?"

*Uu?* Kuro Usagi started to contemplate that line of thought. It wasn't that there existed no such objects but it's just that if they wanted to obtain it, the amount of time left to them was overwhelmingly inadequate. If only there were a few more days, they might just have a plan to solve it ……

"Do you guys know of the story where [Perseus] fought against Gorgon to seek justice?"

"Eh?"

Kuro Usagi’s abrupt question caught them by surprise but they replied without much confidence.

“When mentioning [Perseus], I only know of it being the name of a constellation. And Gorgon should be that snake-haired monster right?”

“Yes. The one who assassinated Medusa was a knight called Perseus.”

—The legend of Perseus' crusade against Medusa.

He had received the four Gifts from the Greek Gods and journeyed to launch his crusade against the Gorgon.

With a pair of shining wings sprouting from it—Hermes' boots.

A weapon that’s able to behead the Gods—Harpe.

The protection of Pluto’s armor—Hades' Helmet.

Although there was another Gift that is the shield of the God of war Athena, but it would seem that it has already been lost in the world of Little Garden.

Commanding the powers of all these powerful Gifts, Perseus still understood that his power was still unable to match up to Medusa. Hence he used the Hades Helmet to turn invisible and successfully beheaded her when she was asleep.

And in an ironic way, the head of the Gorgon became the greatest Gift that ensured his success on his future ventures and quests.

“Is that so? Then, is there a problem with that legend?”

“Communities that possess a certain level of strength may want to boast about their own legends and sometimes prepare Gift Games that would allow the re-enactment of the legend. They would only allow Participants who meet a certain criteria to challenge that Gift Game. And the bet would be their legend—and Flag.”

Asuka and Yō seemed to have realized what Kuro Usagi was getting at and they drew a sharp intake of breath.

“Flag……! If we can get that, maybe we will be able to use it for our negotiations!”

“Yes. But since it is challenge to the legend, it needs certain special conditions to be met. One must clear two of the Gift Games proposed by the other party and provide the evidences. And both of them are harsh trials that would require a few months or years to clear……but unfortunately, we do not have the luxury of time.”

“I’m coming in!”

Just then, Izayoi kicked through the room door with a *Bam!*. Kuro Usagi cried out in surprise:

“Iza…Izayoi –san! Where were you all this while……No! Before that, can all of you not destroy stuff when you enter?!”

Although she had already given up, but the act of destroying a room door that wasn’t even locked was clearly a deliberate act of finding fault with something that didn’t have one. However, Izayoi only shrugged his shoulders without a sign of wanting to reflect on his actions.

“Well, because the door is locked.”

“Ah, I see! Then what is this door handle doing in Kuro Usagi’s hand huh?! You BAKA!”

Kuro Usagi exerted her full force into her throw. Izayoi laughed heartily as he used the large bundle under his armpit to receive the door handle thrown at him.

“What’s inside that bundle?” Yō stared at the big bundle with curiosity in her eyes.

“Game Trophies, want to have a look?” Izayoi slightly loosened the bundle’s opening to allow Kasukabe Yō to have a look.

And Yō's expression could be seen changing in an instant. From being calm and quiet earlier, Kasukabe Yō who lacked much variation in her expression could be seen staring at the contents with widened eyes in surprise.

"————……this…how did you get it?"

"Didn't I already say that this is my trophy?"

"……? What's up with you guys?"

It was now Kudou Asuka's turn to run to the bundle to take a peek. Although Asuka had initially displayed a look of puzzlement in response to the contents that she saw before her, but at the moment of understanding it, a little giggle escaped her lips.

*Puhu! * Asuka clamped down on the corners of her lips as she seemed to be controlling her urge to laugh while wearing that expression of repressing her smile as she accosted Izayoi:

"Could it be……all this time you had been running around to collect these things alone?"

"Nn, I'd gathered them until the very end."

"Fufu, I see. But, Izayoi-san……"

Asuka had a fierce look as she grabbed Izayoi's ear while feinting displeasure:

"Since you had such an interesting plan…… be sure to report to me from now on, you got that?"

"Well, I guess I'm really sorry about this then, I will be sure to tell you next time, Ojou-sama."

They exchanged a playful smile. It was a smile on the two problem children that could be liken to the radiance exuded from children who had found a new game.

Lastly, Izayoi brought the bundle before Kuro Usagi.

“Kuro Usagi, I’ve already brought the ticket that can reverse the current situation. You do not have to go to [Thousand Eyes] anymore and as for the rest, I will be leaving it to you to make the choice.”

He tossed the bundle onto Kuro Usagi’s lap but Kuro Usagi didn’t even confirm the contents as she just stared at Izayoi who looked quite pleased with himself with an incredulous expression.

“Could it be…in that short amount of time……for real……?”

“Nn. But compared to the Game itself, the main problem was the race against time. It’s fortunate that I managed to pull it off in time.”

Izayoi gave a shrug while replying in a frivolous manner. However the battles shouldn’t have been as simple and relaxed as he described.

“Thank you… with your…with this, Kuro Usagi can lift her head high to issue her challenge to [Perseus].”

“There’s nothing to thank me for, after all the fun will only start later.”

I didn’t do it for any one in particular. With that, Izayoi gave a smile. However, there wasn’t a need to remind others and without a doubt Izayoi had definitely fought for the Community. Just that act alone was good enough to make Kuro Usagi feel touched.

(Kuro Usagi really……feels that everyone who joined the Community, has really been a blessing.)

Kuro Usagi hugged the bundle tightly. There was no need for her to confirm the contents. Kuro Usagi already knew what was inside and compared to the trophies, the well-meaning of the trio had deeply touched her heart.

Giving a quick swipe at the tears that threatened to flow down her face, Kuro Usagi stood up with gusto and all traces of faltering hesitation had disappeared from her eyes.

She looked around at the faces of the trio as she loudly declared:

“We will be declaring war on [Perseus]. Let’s go fight to regain our comrade, Leticia-sama!”

## Part 2

—Outer Gate Number 26745, [Perseus] Base.

After [Perseus] having welcomed the group of [No Name], who knocked upon their wide white palace doors, both parties had sat facing each other in the audience hall.

Laius who had turned up for the negotiations had a smug smile on his face as he kept casting hot and passionate longing looks at Kuro Usagi. However, Kuro Usagi ignored that as she cut to the chase:

“We of [No Name] request to have a duel with [Perseus].”

“What?”

Laius’s expression changed immediately and the words that were out of his expectations caused him to furrow his brows. But Kuro Usagi continued on:

“Regarding the style of the battle, even if you use the most difficult level of Gameplay possessed by [Perseus], we will also accept it without complaining.”

“Huh? WHAT? Did you come to talk about this kind of stupid stuff? I did say that I didn’t want to duel, right?”

Laius seemed disappointed by the direction of the discussion. Although he was confident that even if they did duel, his side would never lose, since the opponent was a [Highborn of Little Garden] and the rabbit that possessed Indra’s equipment would be one of the opponents, it would stand to reason that he should not accept the Game simply, for it would be risky.

Moreover, to duel with a [No Name] Community? That in itself would already be a type of humiliation.

Laius waved them away, clearly rejecting their request for a duel.

“If that’s all that you want to say, then get lost. Ah~what a pain. Although it’s not my taste, I will just take that Vampire to vent all this suppressed agitation. After all it’s already going to be sold to that lecherous fat pig that won’t mind inferior goods—“

—*Bam!* Kuro Usagi cut into his words as she slammed and started to unwrap the huge bundle before Laius.

Rolling out from the bundle were two precious stones that depicted the symbol of [Gorgon’s head], a red and a blue precious stone.

Upon seeing the two precious stones, all the Men of [Perseus], who had stood at attention at the side, gave a surprised cry.

“That… That’s the!”

“The Gift that represents the Authority to challenge [Perseus]……? Could it be that a mere no name Community has defeated the sea monster Kraken and Graeae trio of sisters?”

The members of [Perseus] were thrown into confusion. In a normal situation, if there was a Community which appeared to have obtained an Authority of challenge, the Base would be notified by mail. But it would seem that they did not learn of it.

But that was also to be expected since the documents piled upon Laius’s desk had already formed a small mountain.

“Oh, that Giant Tako and old crone? It was quite interesting, but I guess the snake was a nicer warm-up.”

Izayoi cracked his neck to the sides. These precious stones were Gifts that could only be obtained after defeating the monsters which had appeared in the legend.

This Game was a trial that was always open to the weakest and lowest level Communities. When it is being challenged, the Game would also offer the replicas of Perseus's equipment. It was a Gift Game that was quite complete in its structure and considerations.

As for the reason behind offering the Authority of challenging [Perseus] as the prize, it was to re-enact the legend of Perseus while helping to nurture the desire to progress in the lower levels.

But Laius held no such noble belief as he gave a harsh click of his tongue while looking at the precious stones before him.

(Tch! I had thought that it would just be an easy time dealing with the lower level Communities and had just left it be…)

It was only recently that Laius had thought of dismissing the system that was initiated by the Niidaime, and his situation just had to appear now.

Laius's displeasure had reached its peak.

"Hmph……okay, then I will just play with you guys. Originally this Game's aim is to let Communities who overestimate their abilities know their place. To make sure that you guys will never have that idea to stand against me, I swear that I will completely… annihilate you all!"

Laius' toss swept his impressive coat back as he advocated angrily.

Kuro Usagi evenly returned his stare while declaring war:

"After trampling on our Community with many a rude behavior, there isn't a need to talk any further is there? We of [No Name] will settle it out with [Perseus] in the Gift Game!"

# Chapter 8

## Part 1

**<FAIRYTALE in Perseus>**

**Participants::**

***Sakamaki Izayoi**

***Kudou Asuka**

***Yō Kasukabe**

***Leader of [No Name]: Jin Russel**

***Leader of [Perseus]: Laius Perseus**

**Clearing conditions: Defeat the leader of [Perseus]:**

**Defeat conditions::**

***When the leader of the participating Community surrenders.**

***When the leader of the participating Community loses the right to participate.**

***When the participating Community is unable to meet the above stated Clearing condition.**

**Details of the Game Stage and rules::**

***The leader of the Community that hosts the game is not allowed to leave the Headquarters—the deepest part of the White Palace.**

***The participants of the Host Community are not allowed to enter the deepest part of the Palace.**

***Participants are not to let themselves be seen by the members of the Host Community(excluding the Leader of the Game).**

***Participants who have been spotted will be seen as being eliminated and hence lose their rights to challenge the Game leader.**

***Participants who have been eliminated will only lose their rights to challenge the Game Leader but may continue to participate in the Game.**

**Oath: [No Name] pledges to respect the above stated contents based on our glory and flag to participate in the Gift Game.:**

*"[Perseus]" Stamp*

Part 2

In the next moment after signing on the [Geass Roll], the five of them were immediately surrounded by light that filled their vision before them.

The dimensional warp shifted and rushed the five of them out of the door, moving them towards the entrance of the Gift Game.

And as Izayoi and the others who stood before the doors looked around casually, they noticed that the surroundings around the white palace had been severed from Little Garden and had become a Palace that floated in the middle of nowhere. This was clearly a location within Little Garden that was yet not in Little Garden.

“A disqualification upon being sighted? In other words, we have to assassinate Laius?”

Izayoi gazed up at the white palace while seeming to speak his thoughts in a tone that was barely containing his excitement.

“If that’s the case, Laius would also enact the legend by going into a slumber right? But even so the battle will not be that easy.” Jin responded.

“YES. That Laius should be waiting at the deepest part of the Palace and prepared to meet us. But before that, we must successfully overcome the obstacle of the Palace. Unlike the legend of Perseus, we do not have the Gift of Hades. And since we do not have the Gift of invisibility, we will need to have an elaborate and cautious battle plan.” Kuro Usagi clarified the points to note while bringing her index finger up before her. The Gift game this time had been partially modeled after the Greek mythology, the legend of Perseus.

If they couldn’t escape the attention of the [Host] members to reach the deepest part of the Palace, there wouldn’t be a need to battle Laius as they would immediately be disqualified from the Game.

Asuka wore a serious expression on her face as she confirmed and read out the rules of the [Geass Roll]:

“Those who are spotted will lose their qualification to challenge the leader of the Game. Similarly, if our team’s leader, Jin-chan were to be disqualified before reaching the deepest part of the palace, it will be an immediate loss for the Participating side. Since that’s the case, there should be around three different roles to be played.”

Yō who stood beside Asuka had also nodded her head in agreement. In a normal situation, such a Gift game would require at least a hundred men and to be divided into ten men squads to challenge with the chance of getting a few to reach the deepest part of the palace successfully.

But in such a game, they were to make do with just four members to challenge it. So assigning specific roles was a necessary step to take.

“Hm, first we would need one to fill the role of following Jin-chan to defeat the Game leader; another to search out the enemies and defeat the invisible enemies; and lastly another to forgo the chance right from the start and be responsible for being the bait to taunt the enemy into switching their attention to the eliminated player.”

“Kasukabe, your nose is sharp while your vision and hearing is also exceptional so I will be leaving the invisible enemies to you.”

“Kuro Usagi can only participate in the Game as a Judge, Kuro Usagi’s sorry but she will be leaving the task of defeating the Game leader to you, Izayoi-san.” Kuro Usagi said after Izayoi proposed his motion.

“Ara? Then I’m in-charge of being the bait and to taunt them?”

Asuka replied while showing her slight displeasure at the arrangement.

However, it was already confirmed that Asuka's Gift was currently unable to defeat Laius. Moreover, it was more effective for Asuka's Gift to be used on large numbers of enemies which was an undetermined quantity at the moment. Although she might understand that the arrangement was based on logic, her sensitivity to the underlying meaning might just be causing her to feel unsatisfied. Noticing that, Izayoi spoke up to tease Asuka who seemed to be having a small tantrum:

"So sorry about this, Ojou-sama, I would have liked to pass this task with you, but if we do not win, there won't be any meaning to this battle. If someone had to deal with that bastard, I would still be the best candidate no matter how you look at it."

"……Hmph, forget it, I will just let you have the limelight this time. But if you dare lose, better be prepared, for I will not be letting you off lightly!"

Izayoi gave a nonchalant shrug in reply. However, Kuro Usagi had a grim expression as she brought up her worry:

"Although it's regrettable, but it is no guarantee that we can win. If we do not take the chance of catching Laius when he's off his guard, it should become quite a harsh and bitter battle."

Four pairs of eyes were now trained on Kuro Usagi upon hearing her warning.

"……Is that villain really that strong?" Asuka looked a little nervous as she inquired.

"No. Laius-san himself doesn't have power that is worrying for us, the problem is the Gift that he possess. If Kuro Usagi's guess is right, his Gift should be —"

"The previous Demon Lord-sama who has been contracted as his underling."

"Yep, the previous Demon Lord……EH?"

Izayoi's supplement to her words caused Kuro Usagi to be momentarily stumped for words.

However, Izayoi had a nonchalant expression as he continued:

“According to the myth surrounding Perseus, this world cannot have the head of Medusa for that’s something that has already been offered up to the God of War. However, those guys were still able to use a petrification Gift—[Perseus] that has been invited to become one of the constellations. So to put it simply, that thing hanging around his neck……should be the Demon Star, right?”

“……Demon Star?”

Asuka and the others who didn’t get what Izayoi was talking about, looked at each other while tilting their heads quizzically.

Only Kuro Usagi continued to be surprised and frozen on the spot.

Because she was the only one who noticed how extraordinary Izayoi’s conjecture had sounded.

“Izayoi-san……Could it be that you… have already seen through the secret of Little Garden’s constellations……?”

Kuro Usagi shook her head as she asked the question while continuing to gaze at him as though something unbelievable was standing before her.

“Yep. The previous day when I looked up at the stars, I already had a hunch about it and after meeting Laius, I could almost confirm it. It’s only when I found some extra time to observe the Demon Star that I reached the conclusion recently. After all with Shiroyasha lending me the equipment, doing some research into the background isn’t that much of a problem.”

Izayoi gave a triumphant laugh while Kuro Usagi also revealed a smile that held a hidden meaning as she surveyed Izayoi’s face.

“Could it be that Izayoi-san, you are actually and unexpectedly a brainy sort?”

“What are you talking about at this time? I’m a naturally brainy sort of person. I could even open Kuro Usagi’s room doors without turning the handle, couldn't I?”

“……No, no, to be exact, those doors didn’t have a door handle in the first place and it was only the panel that was left standing.”

Kuro Usagi calmly acted the part of the tsukomi. Izayoi had also noticed that and he decided to give an additional clarification:

“Ah, is that so? But even if there’s a door handle, I can still open the door without using the door handle, you know?”

“…… May Kuro Usagi ask for you to demonstrate as a reference?”

Kuro Usagi stared at Izayoi icily.

Seeming to respond to her question, Izayoi smiled as he walked up to the huge doors.

“Well that sort of thing—-Of course it’s done this way!”

Following the tremendous sound of a crash, he smashed the great doors of the white palace with his kick.

## Part 3

The white palace was a five-story building with the deepest part of the palace located at the highest level and the only way to reach it was to pass through a flight of stairs. Although it was unknown how many people were allotted by the [Host] to participate in the game, they had to secure at least one of the stairways or they wouldn't be able to proceed.

Alerted by the crash of the doors that signaled the start of the Game, the knights of [Perseus] had started scrambling into action.

"Seal off the East and West side of the stairs!"

"You, get into position and stand guard at the front stairs to wait for orders!"

"There's only four of our opponents! The number of pieces that they can sacrifice is limited! As long as you respond calmly, there won't be a chance for them to get past our defenses!"

"This battle concerns our Flag! We must not lose this battle!"

Under the orders of their commander, the knights of [Perseus] displayed a neat and orderly formation at their respective stations.

Games that utilized the Community grounds as the stage weren't just for show. After all, using such a place would give an overwhelming topographical advantage to the Host.

Needless to say, the winning conditions were also very simple and they didn't even need to move their hands, for it was good enough to spot their opponents.

In the hall located at the deepest part of the Palace, Laius who sat upon the throne was confident that his victory would be assured. And what occupied his mind

weren't the thoughts of the Game before him but the seething anger towards his Men who didn't stop the Authority of Challenge from being snatched away.

(Hmph…… Those useless guys, to actually let the [No Name] Community obtain the Authority of Challenge.)

No matter how obedient they were, his Community did not need these sort of incompetent people.

Once this Game ends, he would start purging the incompetents. Laius muttered those dangerous words

—However Laius did not realize that the enemy that he had provoked was an organization of problem children who wouldn't lose to famous heroes and were all of exceptional caliber in the world while being second to none.

## Part 4

The front hall stairs had already been thrown into chaos due to Asuka's valiant efforts in repelling the wave of knights. And all of the knights, who came to meet Izayoi and the others who came from the front, were all delayed by the Gift that Asuka had brought along with her—the Water Tree.

"I've had enough of this! Why are we wasting so much effort on such a little girl?!"

"Go! Those guys who hold the Gifts of Invisibility, go find the rest of the members and round them out! Leave this place to us to handle!"

From the moment when she's spotted, Asuka had already given up the right to challenge the Game leader. Her role was to act as a bait to the best of her abilities, but the thought of running around did not suit her character. Although she had thought of using her Gift to make the enemy stab one another, it would really be lacking in the entertainment value that should be present in Games. Hence Asuka decided that she would make herself the focus of the knights and make them unable to ignore her—starting with the destruction of the White Palace.

"From the left and right! Knock them away together!"

Following the shout, the currents flowed towards the knights. At the same time, the ornate decorations in the Palace were washed by the flood of water and turned the place into a mess. The famous art pieces were also soaked by the rushing waters.

Usually when Gift Games were to be hosted in the Headquarters, all privately owned possessions and property would have been stowed away into the Community's treasury. However due to the abruptness of the Game, there weren't enough preparations made and they didn't have enough Gifts to protect the territory.

Using the loophole in their plans, Asuka started to wreak havoc in the territory. Although there wasn't any more obligation for the knights to battle against Asuka, there's no way for them to allow her to do as she pleased.

"Fufu…….other than those invisible enemies, all the others should be gathered here right?"

Asuka looked around her. Although the knights were wearing flying sandals, in the face of the overwhelming might of the water output and Asuka who controlled the flow of the Water Tree, they were hesitant in charging directly at her.

"This… This isn't good! If we let this continue, the first storey of the Palace will be submerged by the flood!"

The anxious cries and shouts of the knights could be heard echoing within the Palace. Asuka sat upon one of the Water Tree branches as she gave the command to the Water Tree.

"Top right corner. Sweep them down!"

The Water Tree controlled by Asuka's words, shot out a high pressure water jet and caused the knights with the flying sandals to be shot down one after another. As for those knights who managed to dodge the attacks that were similar to highly pressurized water columns sprouting out from the flood below, they were made to retreat by the multiple water columns which sprung up in pursuit. Asuka continued to repeat her act of using her Gift to control the Gift as she thought about it within her heart.

(A Gift that's made to control other Gifts…..is that right?)

She hated the world that would always reply with a 'yes' to her question. However if it's this world of Little Garden, there would be many types of Humans of different colors, ethnicity and the reply would surely be one filled with uncertainty, one

without a definite ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Kuro Usagi had assured Asuka that even if she couldn’t rid herself of the power to control others, but she could choose to not let that power develop further.

The choice of ‘Controlling Gifts’ was a choice made to prevent her hands from destroying the colors in this world. As long as she controlled and not develop her power to exert a control over their wills, she wouldn’t be twisting the hearts of the people around her like Izayoi and Yō right?

(But……That’s another matter. Now, just to control this Water Tree to listen to my commands, it’s already requiring all my willpower to do so, that sure is pitiful of me…)

Asuka lightly touched the branch of the Water Tree. Just like a response to her action, the tree’s vein pulsated beneath her touch.

Although she had understood the method to use her ability, there was still a look of dissatisfaction on her face. The biggest discontent was the fact that this congenital talent still produced such a small amount of power like that of a baby chick. And that caused her to exert all her will to control the Water Tree. The reason that Asuka had brought the Water Tree which is the lifeline of the Community today and had not chosen one of the Gifts from the Community’s treasury was due to the fact that only the Water Tree was able to obey her commands.

For Asuka who had a high sense of pride in herself, being unable to control the other Gifts made up one of the root causes of her dissatisfaction.

(But well, I guess it’s just good enough for now. After all, compared to previously when I always took the power to [Dominate] for granted, if there’s no wall for me to overcome, it would really make me feel as if there’s nothing for me to work for.

So from today onward, I will need to train to become more adept at controlling various types of miracles.)

Hu~* She breathed out a breath of air and seeming to respond to her action, the Water Tree launched another wave towards the knights.

Her role to play was to secure the path and be the bait. Since that was the case, Asuka would use her full might to wreak as much havoc as she could. Asuka stood to allow her red formal dress to flap wildly in the wind as she raised her hands above the obedient Water Tree.

## Part 5

Having gone their separate ways from Asuka, Izayoi and the others were completely different from Asuka's behavior as they held their breaths while surveying the situation.

Kasukabe Yō hid behind a pillar of the palace and pricked her ears up to search for any disturbances in the vicinity.

After some time, Yō gave a little start and gave the others the look.

"Someone's here, hide quickly."

She gave the warning in a strained voice. Although the person remained to be seen, but it didn't mean that the sound or smell would be erased. The highly sensitive senses of Yō were the only effective measure against the Gift of Invisibility.

Crouching low like a wild beast, Yō launched an attack on the unseen enemy.

"What….How's that possible?!"

A surprise cry escaped the mouth of the opponent before a quick and fierce blow on the back shaft of his head was landed by Yō.

Immediately, the knight fainted from the blow without ever understanding how his position was seen through. And a helmet rolled off from the knight as he fell forward to the ground, causing the figure of a knight to materialize from the previously 'empty' spot. Seeing that, Yō made a conjecture:

"This helmet should be the Gift of Invisibility."

"Here, ochibi-sama. Take and wear it."

"Wah!"

Izayoi had picked up the helmet and jammed it onto Jin's head. Instantly, Jin's figure faded away without a trace.

Being the Game leader of the [No Name], it would have been an immediate loss for the [No Name] if Jin were to be spotted. Hence prioritizing his safety would be the first thing to do.

Upon confirming Jin's invisibility, Kasukabe Yō nodded her head.

"As expected, the Gift of Invisibility is the most important piece to the clearing of the Game. After all, even with much caution, it wouldn't rule out the possibility of being spotted by one of the guards. As long as there's a few guards placed along the stairs that lead to the depths of the Palace, there wouldn't be a chance of clearing it."

"The opponent seems to have limited the number of people who held onto the Gift of Invisibility as well. I guess that's to prevent it from being stolen by the Participants that easily……there we will at least need another… of course the best possible situation would be to have two more, but……" Izayoi was hesitant with his words.

Amongst the three of them, only Jin and Izayoi were required to proceed to the deepest part of the Palace.

If they could acquire another one for Yō which meant three in total, that would be for the best but if there were times that greed would lead to the downfall of plans.

"Oi, ochibi-sama, change of plans! Kasukabe and I will be fighting those invisible guys, give me the Gift."

"Ah……okay."

Jin passed the Gift to Izayoi. Before wearing the helmet, he reaffirmed Yō's thoughts.

“If we continue to drag out the small skirmishes before the final battle, it will just continue forever. The main focus is Laius, so I can only apologize to you.”

“Don’t mind it.” Yō shook her head.

As long as she moved around in plain sight, she should be able to lure an enemy that had the Gift of Invisibility but at the cost of Kasukabe Yō’s qualification to challenge Laius. However, they should not allow this sort of thing to cost them their opportunity to obtain victory.

“Sorry about that. Looks like I’ve taken all the best parts. Although I may seem like this, but I’m really thankful to Ojou-sama and you. For it doesn’t look like I can clear this Game alone this time round.”

“That’s why I said pay it no mind, we will make sure to collect it from you later.”

Yō promised in a monotone that she would surely ask for the debt to be paid.

And that almost made Izayoi laugh out loud but now wasn’t the time for that.

“Ochibi-sama, go and hide. Even if you die, don’t let yourself be found.”

“Okay.”

Izayoi’s figure vanished and the two of them left the shadows of their previous hiding place to run around in the White Palace.

“Found them! It’s the [No Name] Community’s little girl!”

“With this, there will only be three of them left!”

“Good! Capture that girl! Use her as a hostage to lure all the others out of hiding!”

The knights rushed towards Yō but they were sent flying out of the white palace by an unseen Izayoi.

“What a bother!”

The knights that were sent flying screamed as they crashed through several layers of wall , continuing to maintain that speed of the Third Cosmic Velocity to fly to the end of the horizon.

As usual, Izayoi sure didn't hold back on his opponents.

"How is it, Kasukabe, have you found them?"

"No…… Asuka's making a lot of noise and the others are clamoring loudly in their battle against her, it's a little……..Woah!"

Just then, Yō was suddenly flung back to strike on a wall without any warning. Izayoi immediately gave a kick in the direction where the attack most likely came from but there didn't seem to be a response.

But what's stranger was the fact that even with Kasukabe's sharp senses, she had not noticed the approach of the enemy. Even for Izayoi, to actually be unable to sense the person who managed to come close, that's an unusual situation.

And there was only one possibility that Izayoi could come up with.

(Could it be…… that someone's not using a replica but is using the real thing?)

Yes. Not only erasing the figure of the person but also the smell, heat, sound. A Gift that could completely erase the presence of a person.

There's a knight who holds that Gift obtained by Perseus in the Greek myths……which holds the power of Hades, and−

A Gift that's able to assassinate even the Gods had crept up on them and now lurked somewhere nearby.

(Tch! This sure is tricky. If my helmet were to fall off by accident, I would be disqualified!)

When Yō had been attacked, Izayoi had been completely unaware of the enemy's presence. The presence was secondary to the fact that he didn't even catch the earlier action of the enemy's attack.

And since there's the rule of 'do not be spotted', this was an enemy whom they had to avoid with care.

"Oi! Kasukabe, let's retreat temporarily!"

Izayoi gathered Kasukabe Yō who was on the floor into his arms but the unseen enemy seemed to have expected this move from him as an attack was launched at Izayoi. As long as Izayoi moved to pick up Yō who was visible, the enemy would naturally be able to grasp the position of Izayoi. And as Izayoi was knocked flying by the impact of a huge blunt object, he quickly clamped his hand over his helmet while clicking his tongue harshly.

"That was dangerous! The helmet almost fell off! What a bastard! In fact, I had wanted to return a blow but it seems that I truly can't feel the presence at all! Should I just start hitting at random?"

"No. Wait."

Yō who may have suffered a blunt trauma on her lungs went into a painful coughing fit before recovering enough to ask Izayoi to stop. She had been struck by quite a heavy blunt weapon and to be conscious despite that injury was quite a feat in itself. But as expected, it must be quite painful to her.

However, there was a look in her eyes that seemed to hint that she had gotten onto something good.

"How is it? Is there a way?"

"Nn. But it might be overheard. Let's just run for now."

Izayoi nodded as he picked up Yō once more. And at his movement, his back was immediately knocked once more by something like a blunt weapon. However, for Izayoi who couldn't even get hurt from a battle with a Snake God, this was totally not a fatal blow at all.

Using his strength to twist his upper body while lashing out with his foot, he finally kicked something like a blunt weapon.

The Blunt weapon that fell from the Invisible knight was of an alarming size, a metal mallet of the size of a grown man. If it were just Izayoi himself, it wouldn't be much per say. But that metal mallet should be strong enough to destroy the helmet replica. Picking up the metal mallet, the knight hid his movements once more and continued to pursue Izayoi and Yō.

"Beside the cloisters, wait in the corner. Go."

Izayoi ran straight for the cloisters located at the West Side of the White Palace before stopping at the destination to place her down.

"Next, just attack the spot that I point to you on my signal."

"Well, that's fine by me, but are you able to sense the enemy?"

Yō nodded her head and Izayoi's expression turned into one of surprise.

The enemy's elimination of presence was perfect. Izayoi could only think of a be hit and return a hit method but Yō seemed to have a secret counter measure and that made him very interested in her method.

"Very well. Compared to using luck, directly exposing the opponent seems to be more interesting."

"That's what I think too—get ready."

Izayoi faced his back against Kasukabe Yō. Since they were in a corner of the cloisters, the opponent could only launch his attack from either the left, right or front. Izayoi also heightened his senses as he lay in wait.

Just then, Izayoi felt a Tinnitus at his ears. This is because, though Izayoi might not be as good as Yō in terms of hearing but his senses were far better than normal people and that allowed him to recognize that frequency of sound waves.

(That sound wave……Oh, I see, so that's how it is?)

Seeming to have understood everything, the corners of Izayoi's lips curved upwards in a slight smile.

—The invisible knight used the Gift of Hades Helmet to completely erase his presence. This Gift, which was created to assassinate the Gods, could hide the user's heat signature, smell and even sound. Even if up against a visually poor snake that used its sensitive heat probe organ ……it will not be able to capture the user's location.

(The enemy's at a position of ten meters away observing the situation, there's no problem, he doesn't seem to have taken notice yet.)

However, this Gift of Invisibility had a fatal weakness.

This Gift's ability was to make one transparent rather than completely permeable.

For example, the sound waves emitted by dolphins or bats and submarines which copy that with a sonar function to rely on the reflected sonar waves to explore the area. That would be able to counter this Gift of Invisibility.

(……! Coming!)

The invisible knight may have thought to directly score a hit as he launched his attack on Yō from the left.

He's the elite of [Perseus], and was a knight who was strong enough to obtain the legendary Gift. It would seem that he would be the key figure in the prelude of the battle with Laius.

His pace was heavy and fast as he shortened the distance between them in a moment and had raised his mallet up high.

"Left, strike now!"

Kasukabe Yō gave a shout and reacting to her shout, Izayoi released a fist in that direction.

Although there wasn't any sound from the part that the fist connected with, there was the feeling of something like an armor shattering under the impact, causing Izayoi to be aware of the knight's presence in that empty space before him.

"Wuo……oh……"

And a painful moan escaped from the empty space. Izayoi jumped onto the Invisible knight and pulled off his helmet.

The Invisible knight was none other than the trusted aide who always stood beside Laius, awaiting orders.

Izayoi spun the helmet while commenting with a smile:

"Oh…..Impressive that you can take that blow. Although I did hold back, it was still supposed to blow you to the end of the horizons."

"……Hmph. Then, that must be a praise to our armor."

The trusted male aide's words were beating around the bush in praise for Izayoi's fist was just that heavy and violent.

Even though in the face of a knight, who had challenged many Games in his lifetime, a battle seasoned knight, one blow was all it took to make him admit defeat.

“If it were a lucky strike due to randomly thrown punches, it would be a different matter. But this is a strike that defeated the Gift of Invisibility head-on, impressive. You guys do possess the right to challenge Laius-sama.”

The knight sank to his knees and crumpled on the floor. Grabbing the Gifts of Invisibility, Izayoi and the others rushed towards the depths of the Palace.

## Part 6

Izayoi and Jin, who obtained the second Gift of Invisibility, finally arrived at the highest level of the Palace. The Palace depths didn't have a ceiling over it but was constructed like a simple arena.

"Izayoi-san……Jin-bocchan……"

Kuro Usagi, who had waited for them at the top floor gave a sigh of relief after looking them over with her eyes.

Lifting their heads to gaze at the skies above the wide expanse of the arena, there stood a figure looking down upon the people beneath his feet.

"—Hmph, what a useless bunch, looks like I must do a thorough purging of trash after this business is done."

The figure that floated in the skies did possess a pair of wings.

They were a pair of shining wings that sprouted from the knee-high boots.

“But I guess with this, they will have also learnt who it is that allowed the Community to survive up till now. For this would be a great chance to make them reflect on their ineptness.”

The wings on the boots gave a flap and that was all it took to cause Laius to move faster than the wind and to drop rapidly in a fluid landing motion before Izayoi and the others.

“Anyways, welcome to the topmost level of my White Palace. I will be your opponent as the leader of the Game……Hm. I guess this is my first time saying that line too.”

This was because of the well-maintained discipline and standard of the knights. If it weren’t for the fact that this Game was hosted at the last minute without allowing them time to prepare fully, Izayoi and the others would never have succeeded in their plans to reach this stage.

Izayoi gave a shrug while smiling:

“Hm, after all it was quite a sudden match for them, just forgive them this once.”

“Hmph! To allow mere [No Name]s into my presence? That’s already considered a great sin.”

Laius flapped his wings once more as he retrieved a Gift Card that depicted the symbol of [Medusa’s Head] to draw out a flaming bow.

Upon seeing that Gift, Kuro Usagi’s expression changed immediately.

“……Flaming bow? Meaning to say that you do not intend to use Perseus’s equipment to do battle?”

“Of course. Since I can fly, why should I demean myself to fight on the same stage as you guys?”

Seemingly in contempt towards the others on the ground, Laius took to the air but he showed no willingness to fight. Flying up to the wall of the pit, he removed the short necklace around his neck to raise the small-carved decoration aloft.

“The main battle isn’t with me. I’m the Game leader. My fall would equate to the defeat of [Perseus]. This battle isn’t worth taking that sort of risk right?”

“Uu……..!”

Seeing how Laius was being cautious and not excessively arrogant, it made Kuro Usagi feel anxious and fidgety. If her thoughts were true, the Gift that Laius held was a Demonic Gift that rivaled the Greek Gods.

The Gift held aloft in Laius’s hand started to emit a light. The growing intensity of that light was so bright that it would have caused people to mistake it for a star and it was releasing the many layers of seals while flashing brilliantly.

Reflexively, Izayoi prepared himself by placing himself before Jin and taking up a stance to be ready for the battle at a moment’s notice.

The light grew in intensity and Laius shouted with a fierce look on his face:

“Be Awakened— DEMON LORD ALGOL!”

The light was dyed into a murky brown color and it filled the vision of the trio.

The sharp cry of a female echoed in the White Palace and the palace seemed to resonate with it as it started to tremor.

“Ra …… Ra …… GEEEEEEYAAAAAAaaaaaaaa!”

It was a cry that couldn’t be understood by Humans anymore.

Although starting off with a sound similar to a note of music, it had rapidly progressed to a discordant noise that would have made one go mad with the sound.

The woman that appeared had her body tied with many belts and restraints that looked like the tools used to capture her. Tossing her head of grey matted hair that didn't seem like it belonged to a lady, she continued to scream while ripping off the restrains on her hands. Leaning the upper half of the body backwards, she gave off a more intense scream, causing Kuro Usagi to cover her rabbit ears as she was unable to bear it any longer.

"Ra …… GYAAAAAaaaaaaa!"

"What……What's up with that cry…….?"

"Kuro Usagi! Quick! Dodge it!"

Eh? Kuro Usagi froze in shock. Izayoi grabbed and carried both Kuro Usagi and Jin as he leap back from their original spot.

Not long after that, there came huge boulders that seemed like those found on rocky outcrops of mountains, falling from the skies.

Watching Izayoi and the others having to dodge the continuous rain of boulders, Laius mocked them loudly:

"Oh my~Humans who can't fly sure have it tough. Even clouds that fall from the sky pose a problem to you guys."

"You…You said that these are clouds……?"

Kuro Usagi was surprised as she looked to the outside of the arena to realize that it wasn't only in this arena that the clouds were falling to the ground.

The power of that female called [Demon Lord Algol] had released beams of petrification upon the world prepared for this Gift Game.

This female who possessed the power to instantly fill the world in her light……Kuro Usagi trembled as she spoke her name:

“Star class spirit, Algol ……! Similar to Shiroyasha-sama, a Demon of the Star class Spirits!”

And the whole reason for her being able to use the power of [Petrification] that’s supposed to belong to Medusa should stem from that arrangement in the stars.

Possessing the Demon named after a star, a ‘Star-classed Spirit’ which is the strongest race in Little Garden. That is the greatest trump card of [Perseus].

“I guess both your comrades and my underlings should be petrified by now, right? Hm, it does sound like a good punishment to those useless fools.”

Laius laughed arrogantly. While Kuro Usagi, Izayoi and Jin had not defended themselves from the ray, they were not petrified as well. All due to his whim of wanting to play a little longer.

In a Game that used the Community territory as the stage, there finally appeared the first challenger and to immediately let the Game end would be much of a pity.

Compared to the frivolous remarks that hung by his mouth, Laius’s fighting spirit should have already escalated by now. However, Izayoi was also feeling the same. Having suffered a humiliation in Shiroyasha’s Game, this would be the best stage to vent it.

“Ochibi-sama, back off. Looks like I won’t have any excess power to protect you.”

Izayoi turned back to remark to Jin and Jin seemed ashamed as he backed away.

“Sorry……I really……can’t do anything.”

“Not that you are lousy, but do you still remember that thing I told you?”

Jin nodded his head hurriedly. That was to refer to the conversation they had the other day about the direction of the Community's activities to be focused on 'Defeating Demon Lords'.

Izayoi gave Jin's hair a good ruffle and continuing in a soft voice like the whisper of a secret: "Your plans were all blown right? You had actually wanted to do so by getting Leticia back to defeat Demon Lords right?"

"……yes."

As long as Leticia, the former Demon Lord returned to the Community, such a direction would not be much of a problem. However, with the most important part of her Soul damaged, she would have lost many of her Gifts as well.

"How is it? Do you want to stop the plan?"

Izayoi's tone and expression was very calm as he asked Jin that question.

Facing that gaze that wasn't accusatory or condescending, Jin gave an unmistakable shake of his head.

"There's still you on our side, Izayoi-san. If you really do possess the power to defeat Demon Lords—Please show it to us in this arena."

This time he would be sure to assess Sakamaki Izayoi's true worth.

Facing Jin's straightforward gaze and reply, Izayoi gave a loud laugh.

"OK, better keep your eyes peeled, ochibi-sama."

And before moving forward, Izayoi gave Jin's head one last rough ruffle.

"Well, are you ready now, Game leader?"

"Hm? Aren't you going to team up to fight me? That boy behind you should be the leader right?"

“Oi Oi, are you trying to sell yourself higher than your worth? How can I let our bocchan lift a finger just for the likes of you.”

Izayoi’s frivolous smile made Jin feel a wave of cold malice exude from Izayoi. It would seem that Izayoi was planning to make this commotion an attempt at advertising.

But Laius seemed to be offended at the humiliating words as he shook in an angry roar:

“Hmph! What Big Words From Mere [No Names], Watch As I’LL Make You Regret Those Words!”

” Ra …… GYAAAAAaaaaaaa! “

The shining wings danced a duet with the scar covered grey wings as Laius took a higher position behind Algol to fire an arrow from his flaming bow.

"Hah!" Izayoi timed the attack as he focused into his roar to reflect the flame arrow that drew a snakey trajectory when it was travelling towards him.

Just like that, the flame arrow flew off somewhere, never to be seen again. What a nonsensical lung capacity.

“Tch! Is that to say that you do possess enough power to defeat the Kraken?!”

Realizing that firing arrows would just be a waste of strength, he stashed it back into the Gift Card and called out the recently added Gift that he had stashed into it, the [Celestial Spirit Slayer]—Harpe.

Laius who flew freely in the skies and Algol were rushing towards Izayoi in a pincer attack.

“Hold him down! ALGOL!”

“RaAAaaa! LaAAAA!”

Algol gave a sharp piercing cry while swinging down her arms.

Izayoi blocked her swing and grabbed her by her hands, locking their fingers together.

Although it was unbelievable, but it would seem that he wanted to have a direct confrontation with the Celestial spirit.

“Ha! This is good, really good, very good indeed! I can feel the elation bubbling in me……!”

“RaAAaaaGYAAAAAAaaaaaa!”

Izayoi and Algol were locked in a battle of strength however the arm battle that was pushing back and forth between the two had only maintained for just a short moment.

Algol, being unable to hold on to the end, had instead been suppressed and Izayoi had twisted her arm to pin her to the ground right at the spot she stood moments before.

“GYAAAAAAaaaaaa!”

“Haha! What’s wrong? Former Demon Lord-sama?! Didn’t that sound like a scream from your mouth?!”

Wearing a fierce smile on his face, Izayoi pressed Algol to the ground and stomped on her abdomen. And with just a few stomps, it was already sufficient to cause cracks to spread outwards like a spiderweb. For it carried strength enough to crush the White Palace to bits.

During that time, Laius had been flying behind Izayoi waiting for an opportunity to land an attack.

“Don’t be so arrogant!”

“I will return those same words back to you!”

Laius held the Harpe in a single-handed grip while swooping forward in a fast movement and Izayoi had chosen to launch a kick to counter by rotating his lower body to add to the centrifugal force. Though Laius may have barely blocked the attack with the sword’s handle, the force was still too strong to be negated and he was sent flying back some distance away.

That blow was so great that even with his timely block from a direct impact, it was still able to make him feel nauseous and off balanced. Previously, the knights had all been sent flying into the skies at the Third Cosmic Velocity by Izayoi and now Laius had been sent flying back at a speed much faster than that. Izayoi leapt forward and caught up to Laius within a moment.

“What’s wrong, even though you have those wings, it seems that it’s quite an inconvenience isn’t it?”

“You……You bastard……!”

Laius swung his Harpe.

However, Izayoi easily stopped it in mid-swing and threw Laius to the ground this time. Following that impact, Laius was directly pounded into the arena to crash into Algol who had already lost consciousness by then.

“Uugh!”,”Gya!” came the sounds of two screams.

Facing such a force that was far too absurd to be understood, Laius lifted his upper body while giving a disheveled cry:

“Are….Are you really HUMAN?! WHAT THE HELL IS YOUR GIFT?!”

Well, that was a reasonable question that would come to mind after all. For one to be able to put down a [Celestial Spirit] with just brute strength alone, move faster than the Hermes Boots that granted flight with just a sprint, such a Human should not exist. In response to his question, Izayoi drew his Gift Card to show it.

“The Gift is called [Unknown]—Hm, sorry, I guess you wouldn’t be able to understand with just that right?”

Izayoi gave a shrug of his shoulders while smiling calmly. Seeing Izayoi’s figure in the distance seeming to have taken the situation lightly, Jin gave a panicky shout: “Quick…..Quickly give him the last blow at this opportunity! Don’t let her activate the Gift of Petrification!”

The Celestial spirit Algol’s strength did not lie within her physical prowess.

It was the cursed light that was great enough to petrify the world, her true power—that made her dangerous.

However, Perseus was still in the mind of defeating Izayoi with his own power and decided to move another step up in the direct confrontation.

“Algol! I allow you to demonify this whole Palace! Kill that guy!”

“RaAAaaa! LaAAAA!”

The song of discordant notes echoed in the world and the walls of the white-washed Palace were instantly dyed black while the walls started to pulsate like a living being. And from the dark shadows that spread rapidly throughout the Palace, pillars that took on the shape of serpents erupted from its depths to attack Izayoi.

While dodging the attacks, Izayoi muttered to himself:

“Oh, come to think about it, Medusa also had this trick up her sleeve.”

Medusa also had a legend of producing various types of Demonic Beasts.

Moreover a [Celestial Spirit] is originally of the beings that were on the Gifters' side of the miracles. Currently, the White Palace had already transformed into a Demonic Palace and Laius may not have noticed his surroundings for he seemed to shout like a madman: "I will never let you guys get out alive! This Palace is a creature born out of Algol's power! You guys will never find a place to stand on! For in this Gift Game Stage, there's nowhere left to hide!"

Laius's roar and the discordant notes of the Demon Lord's song merged to give new forms to the Demonified Palace walls, to spawn serpents and scorpions from the walls and pillars that launched their waves of attack on Izayoi and drowned him under their numbers.

Izayoi who was in the midst of the thousands of snakes that engulfed him, muttered his thoughts out loud:

"—……Hm, meaning that I would just need to destroy this entire Palace, is that it?"

"EH?"

Izayoi had responded flatly and that caused Jin and Kuro Usagi to have a very bad premonition about what was to come.

Lifting his fist up high, Izayoi simply let it fall onto the ground of the Palace that had been dyed black by the demonification.

Thousands and thousands of serpents and scorpions were pounded to dust and had dispersed into a cloud of smoke around Izayoi that disappeared as quickly as it was created. Following that, the entire Palace began to shake violently and the arena crumbled, bringing the rubble together with the fourth floor to crash into the third storey.

"Woah….WaWoah!"

“Jin-bocchan!”

Kuro Usagi grabbed the hand of Jin who almost got himself caught up in the collateral destruction. Those who possessed wings to fly had taken off to the skies but even then, the terrible sight before him still caused him to hold his breath in shock.

The arena was different from the other parts of the Palace and it had always been reinforced by a defensive and stable protective barrier. Unless it were to be hit by a strength that was able to cleave through mountains and rivers, there shouldn’t be any way to cause this top story to fall to the next.

“……How can…What the heck is this? Does that guy possess a fist that can shatter mountains and cleave through rivers?”

Laius who stood in the skies gave off a shout that seemed to be angry and yet terrified at the same time.

Standing on a little protrusion that was the remaining footing to be found of the arena, Izayoi looked up with displeasure evidently splashed across his face as he accosted Laius:

“Oi, Game Leader, could it be that this is the last trick up your sleeve?”

“……Uu……!”

The Demonic Palace was still alive but it would seem that it wouldn’t make much of a difference to continue using the same trick twice.

Laius’s face distorted due to his shame. For him, this was his first time hosting an actual Game on his Community ground. But never did he expect that the battle would progress to this stage. Laius’s expression continued to be distorted due to his remorse

for a while longer, but he suddenly recovered his serious expression before putting on a fierce grin.

“I guess it’s enough. Let it all end, Algol.”

The Gift of Petrification was released.

Accompanying the discordant notes that started to fill the air once more, the Celestial Spirit Algol emitted a brownish ray.

And that was the main reason for Algol’s ascension to the Demon Lord’s throne. To use the brownish light to cover everything in the Heavens and the Earth and to change it with the Celestial spirit’s power of the Grey Star.

Izayoi who was bathed in the brown light went straight from the front to hold those eyes with his hands—

“——……Pui! As a Game leader, you are still trying to use such a despicable move!”

Next, he crushed the brown rays with his foot.

……this isn’t a metaphor and there’s no other way to describe that act of his. The brown rays that were emitted by Algol from her eyes had shattered like a glasswork upon the impact of Izayoi’s foot and showered into the air before disappearing.

“How……How is that possible!”

Laius gave a loud shout but in fact, that was the kind of action to be expected.

Even Jin and Kuro Usagi who had been watching the battle from downstairs couldn’t help but cry in surprise as well.

“Negating the Gift of a [Celestial Spirit]—No, destroying it?”

“Impossible! Possessing such an insane physical power and to actually have the power to destroy Gifts too?”

This was what Shiroyasha had meant by concluding his existence being one that is ‘impossible’. These two Gifts were supposed to be mutual opposites. Just like the explanations previously, in this world of Little Garden that gathered many different Gods, Gifts that could negate other Gifts weren’t rare to say the least. However, these were only limited to items that came in the shape of weapons or those that could be materialized.

Just one look from his Gift card would have told anyone that Izayoi did not possess any other [Gift]s.

The problem lay in the fact that there was now a situation where a [Gift that shattered Heaven and Earth] had existed alongside a [Power to shatter other Gifts] simultaneously.

However, this sort of Soul wasn’t supposed to exist in the first place.

“Well then Game leader, let’s carry on. The power of a [Celestial Spirit] shouldn’t be only up to that extent right?”

Izayoi gave a frivolous taunt. However Laius’s will to fight had almost withered to nothingness.

Putting aside the [Highborn of Little Garden] for now, even the [Demon Lord of the White Night] wasn’t able to find out the origin, effects of the Gift, name of the Gift and all the other conditions that were needed to identify it, hence resulting in the overall term of [Unknown].

Possessing a miracle within him that could also destroy miracles. A Gift that contradicted itself.

Facing such an impossible existence before him, Laius had already lost himself in a daze. And Kuro Usagi decided to cut in with a sigh at that point:

“It’s regrettable, but Kuro Usagi thinks there shouldn’t be any new tricks up his sleeve.”

“What?”

“When Algol had appeared in that restrained and locked state, Kuro Usagi should already have guessed……Wanting to dominate over a Celestial spirit, Laius-sama’s ability is still too low and not fully developed yet.”

“Huff!”

Laius’s eyes had reignited its flames of anger. Although his gaze was fierce enough to kill……he did not deny her words for Kuro Usagi was right about that.

However, who could have predicted this sort of tragic situation? Having many Gifts at their disposal and also the Demon Star Celestial spirit that could even petrify the world itself to do Laius’s bidding, to actually lose to the [No Name]…… this is something that no one could have predicted.

“—Hmph! In the end, it’s all dependent on your father’s and forefathers before him and the former Demon Lord-sama? Once your advantage has been proven ineffective, you are left with no other strategies to counter?”

Izayoi disdainfully expressed his disappointment. Just as Kuro Usagi was about to announce the outcome of the Game, Izayoi gave an extremely evil grin as he pushed Laius to the last straw.

“Oh, right. If you lose the Game like this…… you should know what will happen to your Community’s Flag right?”

“Eh? What?”

Laius exclaimed as he could not understand what Izayoi was getting at and it was also understandable for him to be that way.

He had always thought that Izayoi and the others were aiming for [Perseus]' Flag as a piece to negotiate for Leticia's freedom.

"Well that sort of thing can be done after getting the Flag as well right? As long as we have the Flag on the line for the bet, we can immediately request for another Game—Right, this time let's collect your Name."

Laius's face had instantly lost its color.

And that was when he noticed the tragic situation around him for the first time. The crumbling Palace and the petrified comrades before him.

However, Izayoi continued to keep that merciless evil grin on his face as he continued:

"After obtaining those two items, I will completely and continuously trample over your Name and Flag to cause [Perseus] to forever be unable to revive its activities within Little Garden. No matter how much you guys can cry, beg, shout or be angry about it, I will still accomplish it beautifully. Completely till the request of allowing the Community to be spared becomes a dream that will also be shattered in turn……that's right… completely destroyed…I heard that even if it were to be so, those who continue to struggle and grab onto that dream are those that are called Communities right? But since that is so, it makes trampling over a Community much more meaningful right?"

"No…Stop it……"

If he were to lose in this Game, the Flag would be taken away. And in that case, [Perseus] wouldn't be able to reject the request for another duel. To reduel in such a torn up condition would be even more impossible.

Laius……had only realized at this point.

That his Community was facing a crisis of being on the verge of collapse.

“Is that so? You are unwilling? Then there should only be one option left to you right?”

Izayoi’s evil expression suddenly disappeared, to be replaced by one that was smiling happily.

He curled the fingers on his outstretched hand in a provocation extended to Laius.

“Bring it on, Laius. Bet your life—and let me enjoy my time!”

The fierce hedonist stretched his arms as he gave the last nudge to the continuation of the Game. He had not played enough and was thirsting for more. Laius also faced the crisis that loomed over the Community that he led while steeling his resolution to give a shout:

“I will not lose…… cannot lose…… How can I lose?! Beat him down! ALGOL!”

The pair of shimmering wings and grey wings started to beat together. For the Community, the duo who held the determination to win sped forward.

# Epilogue

## Part 1

Leticia's misfortune had only just begun.

Up till the moment that her ownership was to be transferred over to the [No Name], everything could be said to be perfect. However when the five people who defeated [Perseus] carried her statue into the hallway and released her petrification, the three problem children had chorused at once:

"Well then, we will be troubling you from now on, Maid-san."

"Eh?"

"Eh?"

"….Ueh?"

"Ueh what Ueh? After all in this Game it was only us who did the work right? You guys were only following closely behind us."

"Nn. I had also been beaten up and petrified."

"And the one who got you guys the right to challenge is me right? So we have already decided, to divide it in the proportion of 3:3:4 to enjoy your ownership!"

"What are these people talking about?!"

Currently it wasn't only the situation of being late in her tsukomi act but Kuro Usagi was also flustered. By the way, Jin had also fallen into that same state of confusion.

The only person who remained cool and collected was the person in question—Leticia.

"Ah……Uu, that's right. I do owe you guys a debt for the kindness you have shown to me in this incident. Being able to make it back to this Community smoothly has

really touched my heart. However no matter how much friendship we may have, a comrade who has been contracted to this Community should never forget the basic etiquette. So, if it is your request for me to be a maid, I will gladly accept that role assigned to me."

"Le……Leticia-sama?!"

Kuro Usagi's tone had leaked the highest level of anxiety that she had ever experienced to date. She had not thought that she would have to treat her respected elder as a maid……Just when she was still at a loss, Asuka had already happily started preparing Leticia's outfit.

"I've always wanted a blonde servant! After all, the maids in my household were all neither cute nor eye-catching! Glad to make an acquaintance, Leticia, please guide me along in the future."

"Guidance…..No, that's not right. Because it's a role of master and servant, so it should be said as 'Please counsel me'. That sounds better right?"

"Just choose the style of speech that you feel most comfortable with."

"Is…Is that so……No, is it like that? Uu Uu? Since you have already said….."

"Don't imitate the way Kuro Usagi speaks!"

Izayoi started to laugh loudly. Seeing how the four of them managed to create this harmonious atmosphere, Kuro Usagi could only droop her shoulders in defeat.

## Part 2

—On the evening of the third day after the battle with [Perseus].

The [No Name] members including all the children in the community were gathered near the Water Tree reservoir.

The total being a hundred and twenty six people and one cat. Just by the numbers alone, it might be able to be called a medium sized Community or even more.

“Uh~Then! Let’s start the party to welcome the new members who have joined [No Name]!”

The children gave a chorus of cheers. Although it was a small scale party, but one could still see the long tables that had been brought over from the nearby buildings being lined with dishes of food. This really seemed to be a welcome party comprised of children but the trio were not displeased by that fact.

“But, why is the welcome party chosen to be held outside?”

“Hm, I also have that same question.”

“Perhaps there’s a big surprise that Kuro Usagi has prepared for us?”

To be honest, the financial situation of the [No Name] was much worse than expected. The bottom of the treasury would be completely visible within a few more days.

Even if Izayoi and the others started on their official duties, to feed over a hundred children would still be quite a problem. And in addition to the fact that they were still required to defeat other Demon Lords at the same time to rescue the other comrades.

Even just a small-scale party like this at their own home, laughing while filling their tummies, it was already an act that could be described of as extravagant gesture for

them. Asuka who was clear about their impending crisis gave a sigh with a bitter smile:

“I had clearly told her not to overdo it……what a silly child.”

“Yep.”

Yō agreed with a wry smile too. Just when they were casually chatting like this, Kuro Usagi suddenly yelled for everyone’s attention:

“Well then, the main event of today is about to begin! Everyone, please watch the Veil of Little Garden closely!”

The whole Community and its members, including the trio had lifted their heads to gaze at the Veil of Little Garden.

The sky tonight was filled with stars as usual and the constellations in the sky tonight were giving off the same brilliant luster.

However in the few seconds after Kuro Usagi’s request for them to look at the skies, a change occurred.

“……Ah!”

One of the members of the Community who gazed up at the skies gave a gasp.

For it was then that stars could be seen rolling off the night skies one after another. Everyone had immediately recognized it as a meteor shower and had started to cheer.

Kuro Usagi spoke in a sensei-like tone as she told Izayoi and the others and the children:

“The ones who caused this meteor shower is none other than our new comrades. It’s the trio from another world who created this phenomenon of a meteor shower.”

“Huh?”

Amidst the cheers of the children, Izayoi and the others gave off a loud cry of surprise. Kuro Usagi didn't seem to mind that as she continued:

"Similar to the geocentric model that the world of Little Garden adopted…… all the rules were to revolve around the cities of Little Garden. The Community of [Perseus] which had been defeated by our comrades had since been exiled from [Thousand Eyes]. Hence they would have to withdraw from that patch of sky in the end."

Izayoi and the others were stumped for words.

"—Huh……Could it be that you meant……the constellation will disappear from the sky……?"

In that instant, a flash of bright light filled the skies.

Perseus that was originally in the skies with the other constellations— had vanished with the meteor shower.

Though the trio had witnessed many different sorts of miracles, but the scale of this miracle was just of a different level.

Unlike the trio who were gaping and tongue tied by the sight, Kuro Usagi continued with the next part of her speech:

"The meteor shower tonight is also a blessing given by [Thousand Eyes] to mark our Community's revival in activities. Whether it is to make a wish to the meteor shower or to enjoy the moment with everyone, let us all just have fun today alright?"

Kuro Usagi and the children raised their cups happily in a toast. However, Izayoi and the others didn't have the mood to join them.

"To actually be able to be that fickle about changing the constellations in the sky just on a whim……in other words, until the end of this expanse of sky, everything here is just a decoration to make Little Garden a livelier stage?"

“I guess……that’s how it is?”

Asuka and Yō lifted their heads to look at that power that could be called ‘Monstrous beyond proportions’ as they couldn’t help but feel very small and loss compared to that.

Only Izayoi continued to watch that meteor shower while sighing with a feeling of mixed emotions:

“……Although I did see through the fact that Algol wasn’t a variable star, I didn’t expect for the whole Sky to be something that’s created just for the sake of Little Garden.”

Watching the starry skies, he gazed at the empty spot that the constellation of Perseus used to be previously.

—The reason for Algol being in the Demon Star of legends is due to it being a variable star. In reality, it’s a pair of binary stars that are in eclipse and that causes it to change in the wavelength of its emitted light. This would then be called the ecliptic binary star and it’s also the true face of Algol’s Evil nature.

And it would seem that there would be some power great enough that existed within Little Garden that could freely play around with the position of stars. Something that was able to control the existences that were far beyond the reaches of the sky. Just as Izayoi squinted his eyes to seemingly recharge his sense of awe(感动), an energetic voice visited his side.

“HmHm~that surprised you, didn’t it?”

Kuro Usagi skipped lightly to join Izayoi while he spread his arms and nodded.

“I admit that was really quite a checkmate. Be it the edge of the world or the sun that travels along the sky in a horizontal line……I had thought that I wouldn’t be surprised anymore seeing that many absurd stuff so far, but in the end there’s still such a large scale performance such as this. Thanks to that, I’ve managed to come up with quite a good goal for myself.”

“Oh? May Kuro Usagi ask what is it?”

Not a goal for the Community but a personal goal of Izayoi. Even if it were to be someone other than Kuro Usagi, they would surely be interested as well.

Izayoi pointed to the spot in the sky where Perseus had just disappeared from.

“I want to place our Flag to decorate that spot…… how’s that? Interesting right?”

This time, it was Kuro Usagi’s turn to be dazed with her mouth hanging agape. However, she recovered quickly and gave a happy laugh.

“That……sounds really romantic.”

“Doesn’t it?”

“Yea it does.”

Although the question received a smiling face in response, but the process was still one that was arduous and filled with danger. This was because such a process would require the regaining of all the stolen members and items of the Community and also to develop the Community to grow stronger as a whole.

However those two would also come along with his plan right…… for Izayoi had that sort of impression from them.

“You shall cast aside your family, friends, possessions, everything in the world of yours.

And come forth to our [Little Garden].”

Because for the trio who had paid such a high price to come here… Their new life had just begun.